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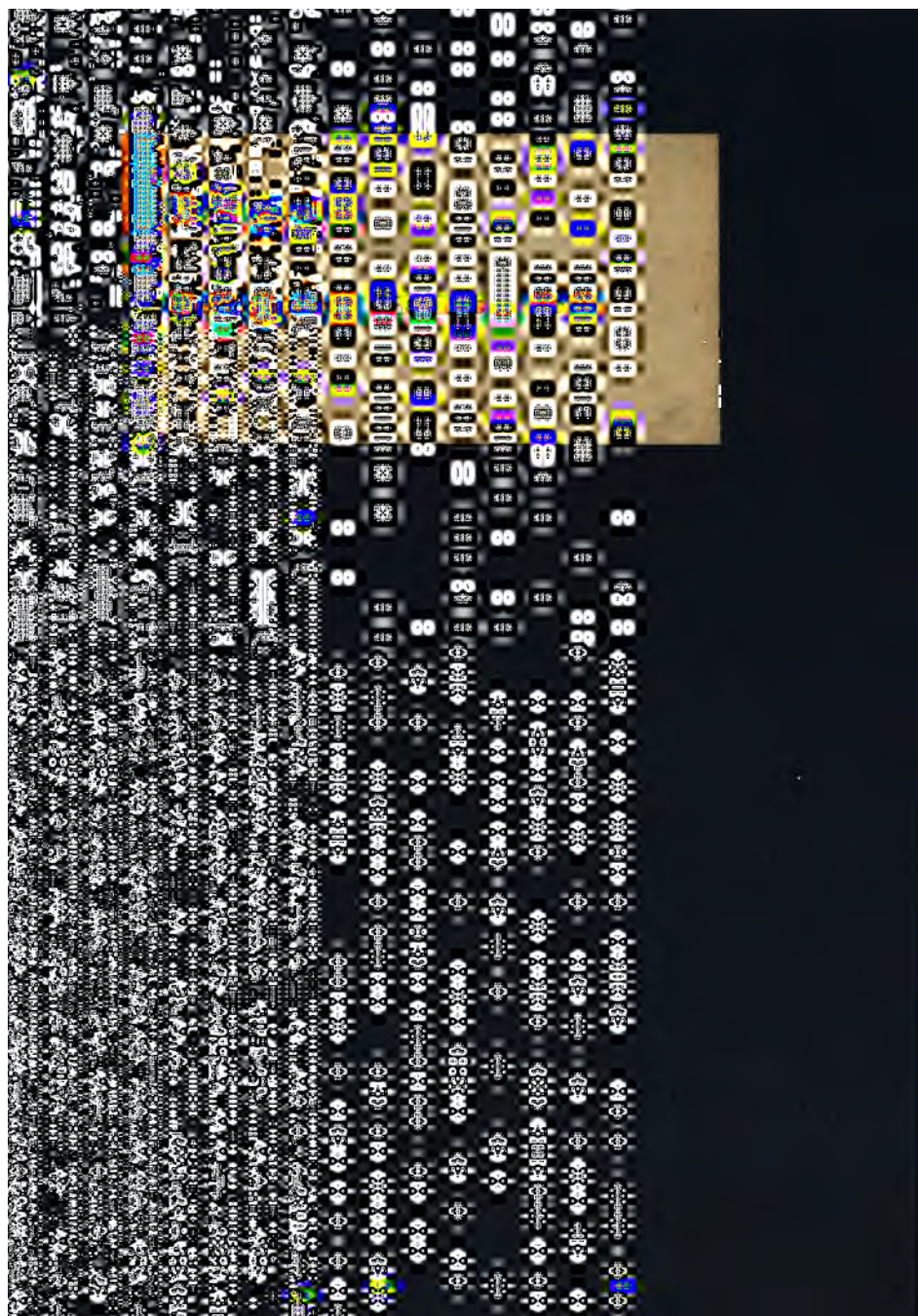
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of

— Hamlet —

As Presented by

Edwin Booth.



"Lord Hamlet is a Prince."

"The expectancy and rose of the fair state."

*"There 's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood."*

*"The native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."*

*"The time is out of joint: O, cursèd spite
That ever I was born to set it right."*



New-York :

Printed, for William Winter, by

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Preface.



THIS version of "Hamlet," which, in its construction and embellishment, is unlike all others, has been made for practical use on the stage. It is shorter than the original by about one thousand lines. The passages excluded are those which, it is thought, might prove tedious in the representation, and which, therefore, may well be spared. Among them are the episode of Fortinbras, the colloquy between Polonius and Reynaldo, and the interview betwixt Hamlet and the Norwegian soldiers. Certain speeches which momentarily arrest the action of the piece—such as that of Horatio on the preparations for war, and that of Hamlet on the custom of revelry, in Denmark—have been rejected, as impediments to directness of dramatic effect. The excisions also include dialogues, such as those at the beginning of the fourth act, which are but the descriptive repetition of action that has already been shown, or the narration of incident that has been distinctly implied. Passages which do but amplify and reiterate ideas that have previously been made sufficiently clear for the practical purposes of the stage have likewise been discarded. The servility of Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern, for example, is known well enough without their candied and fawning speeches to the king, after the play-scene; and both Hamlet's mental vacillation and the springs of it are plainly evident long before he reaches his monologue on the expedition of Fortinbras. In a few instances lines of the original have been transposed: in a very few instances words have been altered—but never to the perversion of the meaning. Coarse phrases have been cast aside, or softened, wherever they occur. In the fourth act, Marcellus, instead of Horatio, has been made to announce the madness of Ophelia, and to attend upon her—for the reason that had Horatio been aware of her calamity he must have communicated it to Hamlet prior to their encounter with the funeral procession in the church-yard. Care has been particularly taken to omit nothing that is essential to the exposition of Hamlet's madness, and of the mental condition that leads him to assume it. "Hamlet's wildness," says Coleridge, "is but half false: he plays that subtle trick of pretending to act, only when he is very near really being what he acts." The point is a subtle one, and of immense importance to the comprehension of the character. It has been steadily kept in view; and the clearness and fullness of all the characters implicated have been studiously sought, in the necessary condensation of the piece. In brief, a conscientious effort has here been made to construct an acting version of "Hamlet" which yet should escape the reproach of having garbled the original. "The theatrical copies of Shakespeare's plays," says Charles Cowden Clarke, "are so notoriously abridged that it is impossible, by them, to judge fairly of the poet's delineation of character, who never wrote a line that did not harmonize with, and tend to define, the portrait he was limning."—To meet the exigencies of the stage without

sacrificing the beauties of the author, and to present Hamlet clearly without keeping him too long in the public eye, will not, at least, be thought an injudicious endeavor. The tragedy is here set forth precisely as it is presented by Edwin Booth : that is to say, with the arrangement of scenes and the stage-directions made and used by him. The Appendix, for which, of course, the Editor is alone responsible to critical judgment, contains remarks upon the character and information respecting the tragedy of "Hamlet," which it is hoped may prove useful—at least by way of suggestion—to theatrical students.

W. W.

New-York, Feb. 7th, 1878.





"Shakespeare is a being of a higher nature, to whom I do but look up, and whom it is my part to worship and to honour."—GOETHE.

"Once more assay

The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit."—KEATS.

"Gervinus remarks that whenever the name of Shakespeare is mentioned, the play of 'Hamlet' first comes to remembrance: and John Kemble observed that in every copy of Shakespeare's works it appeared that 'Hamlet' had been the play most read."—DR. CONOLLY.

"Flame trembles most when it doth highest rise."—DAVENANT.

"We have here an oak planted in a costly vase, fit only to receive lovely flowers within its bosom: the roots spread, and burst the vase."—GOETHE.

"Self-disgust

Gnaws at the roots of being, and doth hang

A heavy sickness on the beams of day.

Cursèd! accursèd be the freaks of nature,

That mar us from ourselves."—HORNE.

*"He has the desire and the power to accomplish great things, but it must be in obedience to the dictates of his own thoughts, and by his own independent, original, and creative energy. * * * The poor plans and intentions of man do not miscarry through the weakness of their authors, but their baseless projects are also, by an intrinsic necessity, as frequently crossed and frustrated by the equally baseless empire of chance."*—ULRICI.

"Wide yawns the grave; dull tolls the solemn bell;

Dark lie the dead; and long the last farewell."—WILSON.



Persons Represented.



CLAUDIUS, KING OF DENMARK.

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK, NEPHEW TO CLAUDIUS.

GHOST OF KING HAMLET, FATHER TO THE PRINCE.

POLONIUS, THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN.

LAERTES, SON TO POLONIUS.

HORATIO, FRIEND TO HAMLET.

ROSENCRANTZ,	}	COURTIERS.
GUILDENSTERN,		
OSRIC,		

MARCELLUS,	}	OFFICERS.
BERNARDO,		

FRANCISCO, A SOLDIER.

SEVERAL PLAYERS.

FIRST AND SECOND GRAVE-DIGGERS.

A PRIEST.

GERTRUDE, QUEEN OF DENMARK, MOTHER TO HAMLET.

OPHELIA, DAUGHTER TO POLONIUS.

LORDS, LADIES, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, PAGES, etc.

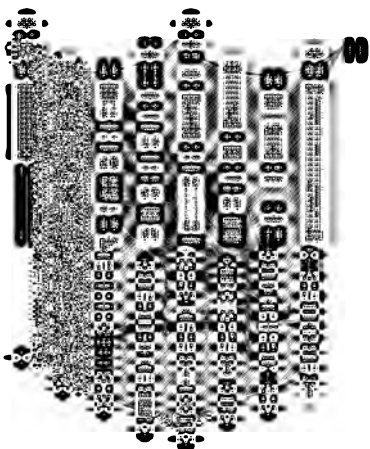
Place and Time.



SCENE.—*Elsinore, in Denmark.*

PERIOD.—*The Eleventh Century.*

TIME OF ACTION.—*Between Two and Three Months.*



H A M L E T.



Act First.

Scene First. { EL SINORE. A PLATFORM BEFORE THE
CASTLE. FULL STAGE. MOONLIGHT.

[*Francisco, as sentinel on guard, discovered at his post. Enter to him Bernardo.*]

Ber.

Who's there?

Fran.

Nay, answer me; stand, and unfold yourself.

Ber.

Long live the king!

Fran.

Bernardo?

Ber.

He.

Fran.

You come most carefully upon your hour.

Ber.

'T is now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

Fran.

For this relief much thanks: 't is bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

Ber.

Have you had quiet guard ?

Fran.

Not a mouse stirring.

Ber.

Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.*Fran.*I think I hear them.—Stand, ho ! Who 's there ?
[*Exit Francisco.*]*Horatio.*

Friends to this ground.

Mar.

And liegemen to the Dane.

Fran.

Give you good night.

*Mar.*O, farewell, honest soldier :
Who hath relieved you ?*Fran.*Bernardo hath my place.
Give you good night.*Mar.*

Holla ! Bernardo !

[*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*]*Ber.*

Say.

What ! is Horatio there ?

Horatio.

A piece of him.

Ber.

Welcome, Horatio :—welcome, good Marcellus.

Mar.

What ! has this thing appeared again to-night ?

Ber.

I have seen nothing.

Mar.

Horatio says 't is but our fantasy,
And will not let belief take hold of him
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us :
Therefore I have entreated him along
With us to watch the minutes of this night ;
That, if again this apparition come,
He may approve our eyes, and speak to it.

Horatio.

Tush, tush, 't will not appear.

Ber.

Come, let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.

Horatio.

Well, let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

Ber.

Last night of all,
When yond' same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one,—

Mar.

Peace, break thee off ; look, where it comes again !

[*Enter Ghost from Castle c.*



Ber.

In the same figure, like the king that's dead.
Looks it not like the king?

Horatio.

Most like :—it harrows me with fear and wonder.

Ber.

It would be spoke to.

Mar.

Speak to it, Horatio.

Horatio.

What art thou, that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!

Mar.

It is offended.

Ber.

See, it stalks away!

Horatio.

Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!
[Exit Ghost R. I. E.]

Mar.

'T is gone, and will not answer.

Ber.

How now, Horatio! you tremble, and look pale:
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on't?

Horatio.

Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.

Mar.

Is it not like the king ?

Horatio.

As thou art to thyself :
 Such was the very armour he had on
 When he the ambitious Norway combated ;
 So frowned he once, when, in an angry parle,
 He smote the sledded Polack on the ice.
 'T is strange.

Mar.

Thus, twice before, and just at this dead hour,
 With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

Horatio.

In what particular thought to work I know not ;
 But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,
 This bodes some strange eruption to our state.
 But, soft, behold ! lo where it comes again !

[*Re-enter Ghost* R. 2. E.]

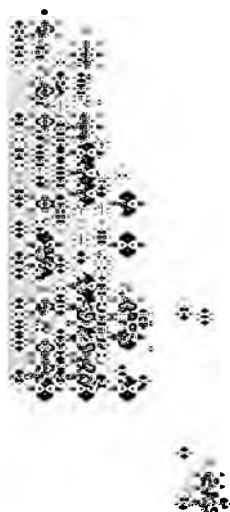
I'll cross it, though it blast me.— Stay, illusion !
 If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
 Speak to me :
 If there be any good thing to be done,
 That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
 Speak to me :
 If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
 Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
 O, speak !
 Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
 Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
 For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
 Speak of it :— stay, and speak !

Mar.

'T is gone.

[*Exit Ghost* L. 1. E.]*Ber.*

It was about to speak when the cock crew.



Horatio.

And then it started, like a guilty thing
 Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,
 The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
 Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
 Awake the god of day ; and, at his warning,
 Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
 The extravagant and erring spirit hies
 To his confine.

Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes
 Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
 This bird of dawning singeth all night long :
 And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad ;
 The nights are wholesome ; then no planets strike ;
 No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm ;
 So hallowed and so gracious is the time.
 But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
 Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.
 Break we our watch up : and, by my advice,
 Let us impart what we have seen to-night
 Unto young Hamlet ; for, upon my life,
 This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

[*Exeunt c.*

Scene Second. { EL SINORE. A ROOM OF STATE IN THE
 CASTLE.

[*Enter the King, Queen, Polonius, Laertes, Lords,
 and Attendants.*

King.

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
 The memory be green ; and that it us befitted
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
 To be contracted in one brow of woe ;
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature,
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.



Therefore, our sometime sister, now our queen,
 The imperial jointress of this warlike state,
 Have we, as 't were with a defeated joy,—
 'Taken to wife : nor have we herein barred
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
 With this affair along :—for all, our thanks.
 And now, Laertes, what 's the news with you ?

[*Laertes kneels.*

You told us of some suit ; what is 't, Laertes ?
 You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
 And lose your voice : what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
 That shall not be my offer, not thy asking ?
 The head is not more native to the heart,
 The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
 Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
 What wouldst thou have, Laertes ?

Laer.

Dread my lord,
 Your leave and favor to return to France ;
 From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
 To show my duty in your coronation ;
 Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,
 My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
 And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

King.

Have you your father's leave ? What says Polonius ?

Pol.

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
 By laboursome petition ; and, at last,
 Upon his will I sealed my hard consent :
 I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

King.

Take thy fair hour, Laertes ; time be thine,
 And thy best graces spend it at thy will !—

[*Enter Hamlet c.*

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

*Hamlet.**[Aside.*

A little more than kin and less than kind.

King.

How is it that the clouds still hang on you ?

Hamlet.

Not so, my lord ; I am too much i' the sun.

[The King, Polonius, and Laertes retire R. X

Queen.

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
Do not forever with thy vailèd lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust :
Thou know'st 't is common,—all that live must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

Hamlet.

Ay, madam, it is common.

Queen.

If it be,
Why seems it so particular with thee ?

Hamlet.

Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not seems.
'T is not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly : these, indeed, seem,
For they are actions that a man might play :
But I have that within which passeth show ;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

*[Exit Laertes, leaving the King and Polonius. /
The King advances.*

King.

'T is sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father :
But, you must know, your father lost a father ;
That father lost, lost his ; and the survivor bound,
In filial obligation, for some term
To do obsequious sorrow ; but to perséver
In obstinate condolement, is a course
Of impious stubbornness ; 't is unmanly grief :
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven.
We pray you, throw to earth
This unprevailing woe ; and think of us
As of a father : for let the world take note,
You are the most immediate to our throne ;
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Queen.

Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet :
I pray thee, stay with us ; go not to Wittenberg.

Hamlet.

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

King.

Why, 't is a loving and a fair reply :
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come.

[*Polonius advances to R. I. E.*

This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart : in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell ;
And the king's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder.

[*March. Exeunt all except Hamlet.*

Hamlet.

O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew !
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter ! O God ! O God !

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses of this world !
 Fie on 't ! O, fie ! 't is an unweeded garden,
 That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this !
 But two months dead !—nay, not so much, not two :
 So excellent a king ; that was, to this,
 Hyperion to a satyr : so loving to my mother,
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth !
 Must I remember ? why, she would hang on him,
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on : and yet, within a month,—
 Let me not think on 't ;—Frailty, thy name is woman !—
 A little month ; or ere those shoes were old
 With which she followed my poor father's body,
 Like Niobe, all tears ;—why she, even she,—
 O God ! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
 Would have mourned longer,—married with my uncle ;
 My father's brother ; but no more like my father
 Than I to Hercules.
 It is not, nor it cannot come to, good :
 But break, my heart,—for I must hold my tongue !
 [*Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo c.*]

Horatio.

Hail to your lordship ! I am glad to see you well :

Hamlet.

Horatio,—or I do forget myself.

Horatio.

The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

Hamlet.

Sir, my good friend ; I 'll change that name with you :
 And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio ?—
 Marcellus ?

Mar.

My good lord,—

Hamlet.

I am very glad to see you.— Good even, sir.—
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg ?

Horatio.

A truant disposition, good my lord.

Hamlet.

I would not hear your enemy say so ;
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence.
To make it truster of your own report
Against yourself : I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore ?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

Horatio.

My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

Hamlet.

I pray thee, do not mock me, fellow-student ;
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

Horatio.

Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

Hamlet.

Thrift, thrift, Horatio ! the funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio !—
My father,—methinks I see my father.

[*All start.*

Horatio.

O, where, my lord ?

Hamlet.

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

Horatio.

[*Meditatively.*

I saw him once ; he was a goodly king.

Hamlet.

He was a man, take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again.

Horatio.

[*With hesitation.*

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

Hamlet.

Saw who ?

Horatio.

My lord, the king your father.

Hamlet.

The king my father !

Horatio.

Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear ; till I may deliver
Upon the witness of these gentlemen
This marvel to you.

Hamlet.

For God's love, let me hear !

Horatio.

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,
In the dead vast and middle of the night,
Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,
Armed at all points exactly, cap-à-pie,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them : thrice he walked
By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length ; whilst they, distilled
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did ;
And I with them the third night kept the watch :
Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
The apparition comes.



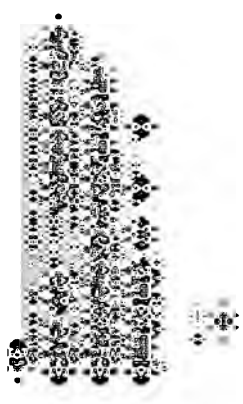
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Hamlet.

But where was this ?

Mar.

My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

Hamlet.

Did you not speak to it ?

Horatio.

My lord, I did ;
But answer made it none : yet once methought
It lifted up its head, and did address
Itself to motion, like as it would speak :
But, even then, the morning cock crew loud ;
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away,
And vanished from our sight.

Hamlet.

'T is very strange.

Horatio.

As I do live, my honoured lord, 't is true ;
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

Hamlet.

Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch to-night ?

Mar., Ber.

We do, my lord.

Hamlet.

Armed, say you ?

Horatio.

Armed, my lord.

Hamlet.

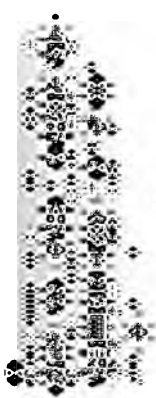
From top to toe ?



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Horatio.

My lord, from head to foot.

Hamlet.

Then saw you not his face ?

Horatio.

O, yes, my lord ; he wore his beaver up.

Hamlet.

What ! looked he frowningly ?

Horatio.

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

Hamlet.

Pale or red ?

Horatio.

Nay, very pale.

Hamlet.

And fixed his eyes upon you ?

Horatio.

Most constantly.

Hamlet.

I would I had been there.

Horatio.

It would have much amazed you.

Hamlet.

Very like, very like. Stayed it long ?

Horatio.

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

Mar., Ber.

Longer, longer.



Horatio.

Not when I saw it.

Hamlet.

His beard was grizzled,—no ?

Horatio.

It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silvered.

Hamlet.

I will watch to-night ;
Perchance 't will walk again.

Horatio.

I warrant 't will.

Hamlet.

If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape,
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still ;
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
Give it an understanding, but no tongue :
I will requite your loves. So, fare ye well :
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
I'll visit you.

Horatio.

Our duty to your honour.

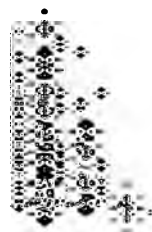
Hamlet.

Your loves, as mine to you : farewell.

[*Exeunt Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo c.*

My father's spirit in arms ! all is not well ;
I doubt some foul play : would the night were come !
Till then sit still, my soul : foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

[*Exit Hamlet L.*



[*Enter Laertes and Ophelia c.*

Laer.

My necessities are embarked : farewell :
And, sister, as the winds give benefit,
[And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,]
But let me hear from you.

Oph.

Do you doubt that ?

Laer.

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood ;
[A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute ;
No more.

Oph.

No more but so ?

Laer.

Think it no more :
For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk : but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now ;
And now no soil nor cautel does besmirch
The virtue of his will : but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own ;
[For he himself is subject to his birth :
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself ; for on his choice depends
The safety and the health of the whole state.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister ;
And keep you in the rear of your affection,
Out of the shot and danger of desire.
The chariest maid is prodigal enough,
If she unmask her beauty to the moon.

Oph.

I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,
 As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
 Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
 Whilst, like a puffed and reckless libertine,
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
 And recks not his own read.

Laer.

O, fear me not.
 I stay too long:—but here my father comes.
 A double blessing is a double grace;
 Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

[*Enter Polonius R.**Pol.*[*Laertes kneels.*

Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
 And you are stayed for. There,—my blessing with you!
 [*Laying his hand on Laertes' head.*
 And these few precepts in thy memory
 Look thou charàcter. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
 Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
 The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
 Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel;
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
 Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware
 Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
 Bear 't, that the opposèr may beware of thee.
 Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
 But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
 And they in France of the best rank and station
 Are most select and generous, chief in that.
 Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend;

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
 This above all,—to thine own self be true ;
 And it must follow, as the night the day,
 Thou canst not then be false to any man.
 Farewell : my blessing season this in thee !

Laer.

[*Rises.*

— Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.
 Farewell, Ophelia ; and remember well
 What I have said to you.

Oph.

'T is in my memory locked,
 And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Laer.

Farewell.

[*Exit Laertes.*

Pol.

What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you ?

Oph.

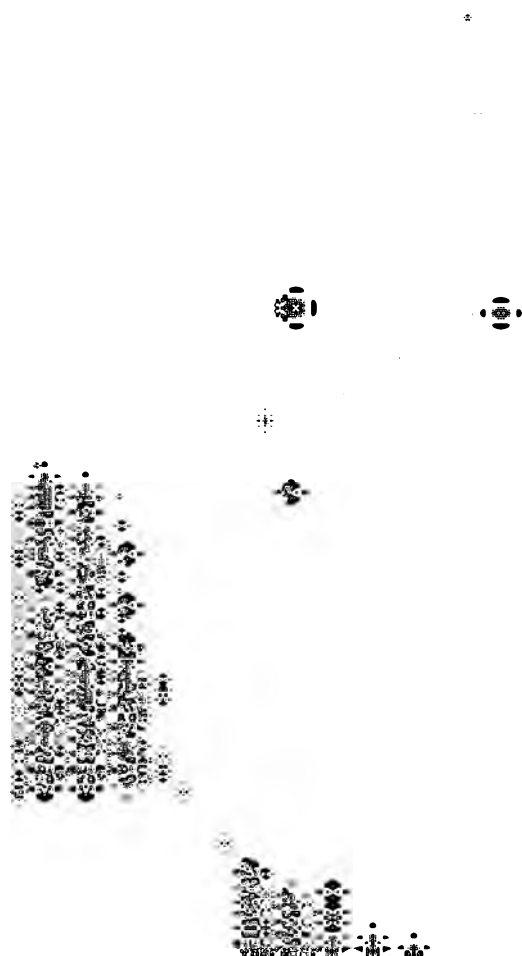
So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

Pol.

Marry, well bethought :
 'T is told me, he hath very oft of late
 Given private time to you ; and you yourself
 Have of your audience been most free and bounteous :
 If it be so (as so 't is put on me,
 And that in way of caution), I must tell you,
 You do not understand yourself so clearly
 As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
 What is between you ? give me up the truth.

Oph.

He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
 Of his affection to me.



Pol.

Affection ! pooh ! you speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them ?

Oph.

I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Pol.

Marry, I 'll teach you ; think yourself a baby ;
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly ;
Or you 'll tender me a fool.

Oph.

My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.

Pol.

Ay, fashion you may call it ; go to, go to.

Oph.

And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

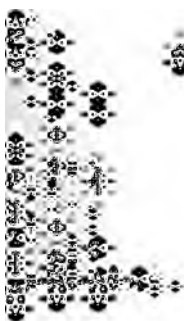
Pol.

Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows.
This is for all,—
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment's leisure,
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you : come your ways.

Oph.

I shall obey, my lord.

[*Exeunt Polonius and Ophelia* R.]



* **Scene Third.**—THE PLATFORM. DIM STARLIGHT.

[Enter Hamlet and Horatio, to Marcellus, who is on guard.]

Hamlet.

The air bites shrewdly ; it is very cold.

Horatio.

It is a nipping and an eager air.

Hamlet.

What hour now ?

Horatio.

I think it lacks of twelve.

Mar.

No, it is struck.

Horatio.

Indeed ? I heard it not : then it draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

[A flourish of trumpets : ordnance shot off, within.]
What does this mean, my lord ?

Hamlet.

The king doth wake to-night, and takes his rouse,
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

Horatio.

Is it a custom ?

Hamlet.

Ay, marry, is 't :
But to my mind,—though I am native here,
And to the manner born,—it is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.

Horatio.

Look, my lord, it comes !

[*Enter Ghost R. I. E.**Hamlet.*

Angels and ministers of grace defend us ! —
 Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
 Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
 Thou comest in such a questionable shape,
 That I will speak to thee : I 'll call thee Hamlet,
 King, father, royal Dane : O, answer me !
 Let me not burst in ignorance ; but tell
 Why thy canònised bones, hearsèd in death,
 Have burst their cerements ; why the sepulchre
 Wherein we saw thee quietly in-urned,
 Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,
 To cast thee up again ! What may this mean,
 That thou, dead corse, again, in còmplete steel,
 Re-visit'st thus the glimpses of the moon,
 Making night hideous ; and we fools of nature,
 So horribly to shake our disposition,
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls ?
 Say, why is this ? wherefore ? what should we do ?

[*The Ghost beckons Hamlet.**Horatio.*

It beckons you to go away with it,
 As if it some impartment did desire
 To you alone.

Mar.[*Ghost beckons.*

Look, with what courteous action
 It waves you to a more removed ground :
 But do not go with it.

Horatio.

No, by no means.

Hamlet.

It will not speak ; then will I follow it.

Horatio.

Do not, my lord.

Hamlet.

Why, what should be the fear ?
 I do not set my life at a pin's fee ;
 And for my soul, what can it do to that,
 Being a thing immortal as itself ? [*Ghost beckons.*
 It waves me forth again ; — I 'll follow it.

Horatio.

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
 Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
 That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
 And there assume some other horrible form,
 Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason,
 And draw you into madness ? [*Ghost beckons.*

Hamlet.

It waves me still.—
 Go on ; I 'll follow thee.

Mar.

You shall not go, my lord.
 [*Horatio and Marcellus seize Hamlet and strive to hold him.*

Hamlet.

Hold off your hands.

Horatio.

Be ruled ; you shall not go.

Hamlet.

My fate cries out,
 And makes each petty artery in this body
 As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
 [*Ghost beckons.*
 Still am I called : — unhand me, gentlemen ; —
 By heaven, I 'll make a ghost of him that lets me : —

I say, away!—

[*Breaking from them.*

Go on; I'll follow thee.

[*Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet. Horatio and Marcellus follow slowly.*

Scene Fourth.—ANOTHER PART OF THE PLATFORM.

[*Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

Hamlet.

Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak; I'll go no further.

Ghost.

Mark me.

Hamlet.

I will.

Ghost.

My hour is almost come,
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

Hamlet.

Alas! poor ghost!

Ghost.

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

Hamlet.

Speak; I am bound to hear.

Ghost.

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

Hamlet.

What?



Ghost.

I am thy father's spirit ;
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul ; freeze thy young blood ;
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres ;
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine :
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.— List, list, O, list !—
If thou didst ever thy dear father love,—

Hamlet.

O Heaven !

Ghost.

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet.

Murder !

Ghost.

Murder most foul, as in the best it is ;
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

Hamlet.

Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love,
May sweep to my revenge.

Ghost.

I find thee apt ;
Now, Hamlet, hear :
'T is given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,
A serpent stung me ; so the whole ear of Denmark

Is by a forgèd process of my death
 Rankly abused : but know, thou noble youth,
 The serpent that did sting thy father's life
 Now wears his crown.

Hamlet.

O, my prophetic soul!
 — My uncle!

Ghost.

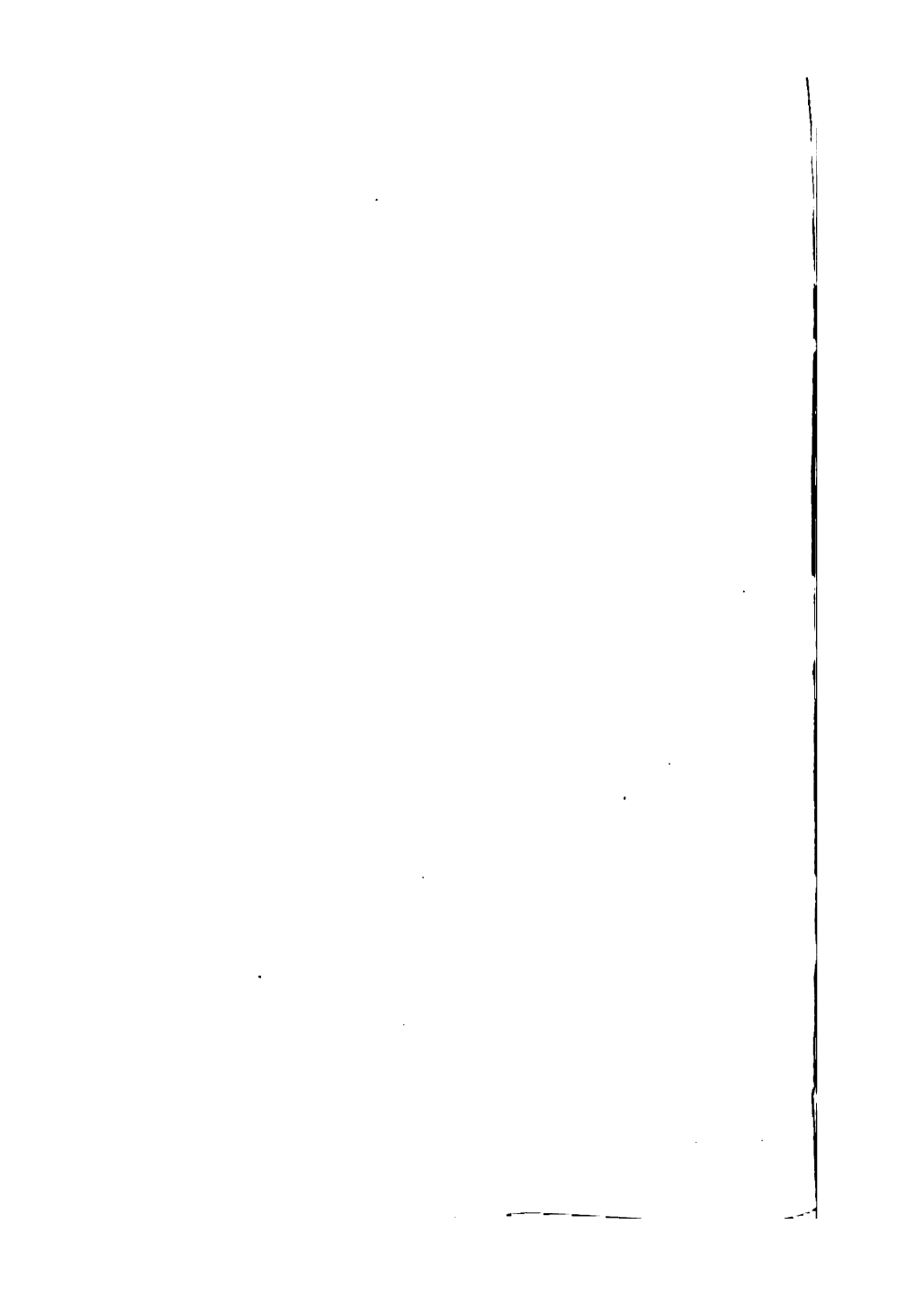
Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
 With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,
 Won to his shameful lust
 The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen :
 But, soft ! methinks I scent the morning air ;
 Brief let me be.— Sleeping within mine orchard
 My custom always in the afternoon,
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
 With juice of cursèd hebenon, in a vial,
 And in the porches of mine ears did pour
 The leperous distilment ; whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man
 That, swift as quicksilver, it courses through
 The natural gates and alleys of the body.
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once despatched :
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
 Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled ;
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head :

Hamlet.

O, horrible ! O, horrible ! most horrible !

Ghost.

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not ;
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damnèd incest.
 But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive



Against thy mother aught : leave her to heaven,
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once :
 The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire :
 — Adieu, adieu ! Hamlet, remember me.

[*Exit Ghost.*

Hamlet.

— [O, all you host of heaven ! O, earth ! what else ?
 And shall I couple hell ?] — O, hold, my heart ;
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
 But bear me stiffly up. — Remember thee !
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee !
 Yea, from the table of my memory
 I 'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 — All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
 [That youth and observation copied there ;
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain,
 Unmixed with baser matter : yes, by heaven. —
 I have sworn 't.

Horatio.

[*Within.*

My lord ! my lord ! —

Mar.

[*Within.*

Lord Hamlet, —

Horatio.

[*Within.*

Heaven secure him !

Hamlet.

So be it !

Horatio.

[*Within.*

Illo, ho, ho, my lord !

Hamlet.

Hillo, ho, ho, boy ! come, bird, come.

[*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*]

Mar.

How is 't, my noble lord ?

Horatio.

What news, my lord ?

Hamlet.

O, wonderful !

Horatio.

Good my lord, tell it.

Hamlet.

No ; you 'll reveal it.

Horatio.

Not I, my lord, by heaven.

Mar.

Nor I, my lord.

Hamlet.

How say you, then ; would heart of man once think it ?—
But you 'll be secret ?

Horatio, Mar.

Ay, by heaven, my lord.

Hamlet.

There 's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark —
But he 's an arrant knave.

Horatio.

There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

Hamlet.

Why, right ; you are i' the right :
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part :

You, as your business and desire shall point you,—
 For every man has business and desire,
 Such as it is ;—and for mine own poor part,
 Look you, I'll go pray.

[Retiring.

Horatio.

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

[Crosses to L.

Hamlet.

I 'm sorry they offend you, heartily ;
 Yes, faith, heartily.

Horatio.

There 's no offence, my lord.

Hamlet.

Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, my lord,
 And much offence too. Touching this vision here,—

[*Marcellus advances quickly R.*

It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you :
 For your desire to know what is between us,
 O'ermaster it as you may. And now, good friends,
 As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
 Give me one poor request.

Horatio.

What is 't, my lord ? we will.

Hamlet.

Never make known what you have seen to-night.

Horatio, Mar.

My lord, we will not.

Hamlet.

Nay, but swear 't.

Horatio.

[Swearing.

In faith,
 My lord, not I.

Mar.[*Swearing.*]

Nor I, my lord, in faith.

Hamlet.

Upon my sword.

Mar.

We have sworn, my lord, already.

Hamlet.

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

Ghost.[*Beneath.*]

Swear.

Hamlet.

Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, true-penny?

Come on:

Consent to swear.

Horatio.

Propose the oath, my lord.

Hamlet.

Never to speak of this that you have seen.

Swear, by my sword.

Ghost.

Swear.

*Hamlet.**Hic et ubique?* then we'll shift our ground.—

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword:

Never to speak of this that you have seen,

Swear by my sword.

Ghost.[*Beneath.*]

Swear.

Horatio.

O, day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

Hamlet.

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
 There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
 Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.
 But come ;—
 Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,
 How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,—
 As I, perchance, hereafter shall think meet
 To put an antic disposition on,—
 That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,
 With arms encumbered thus, or this head-shake,
 Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
 As, " Well, well, we know ;"—or, " We could, an if we
 would ;"—
 Or, " If we list to speak ;"—or, " There be, an if they
 might ;"—
 Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
 That you know aught of me :—this not to do, !
 So grace and mercy at your most need help you.

Ghost.[*Beneath.*

Swear.

Hamlet.

Rest, rest, perturbèd spirit !— So, gentlemen,
 With all my love I do commend me to you :
 And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
 May do, to express his love and friending to you,
 God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together :
 And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
 The time is out of joint :— O, cursèd spite,
 That ever I was born to set it right !—
 Nay, come, let 's go together.

[*Picture.*

CURTAIN.





Act Second.

Scene First. — A ROOM IN THE PALACE.

¶ *Enter Ophelia and Polonius, meeting.*

Pol.

How now, Ophelia ! what 's the matter ?

Oph.

Alas ! my lord, I have been so affrighted !

Pol.

With what, i' the name of heaven ?

Oph.

My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet,—with his doublet all unbraced ;
No hat upon his head ; he comes before me.

Pol.

What said he ?

Oph.

He took me by the wrist, and held me hard ;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm ;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stayed he so ;
At last,—a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,—
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound,
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk,
And end his being : that done, he lets me go :
And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
He seemed to find his way without his eyes ;
For out of doors he went without their help,
And to the last, bended their light on me.

Pol.

Mad for thy love ?

Oph.

My lord, I do not know,
But I do fear it.

Pol.

Come, go with me:
This is the very ecstasy of love.
I am sorry,—
What! have you given him any hard words of late ?

Oph.

No, my good lord ; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters, and denied
His access to me.

Pol.

That hath made him mad.
This must be known ; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.

[*Exeunt Polonius and Ophelia* L. I. E.]

[*Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern* C.]

King.

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
Moreover that we much did long to see you,
The need we have to use you did provoke
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation ; ' so I call it,
Since nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of : I entreat you both,

[*Enter Queen and Attendants* L. U. E.]

That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
Some little time : so by your companies

To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
 So much as from occasion you may glean,
 Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
 That, opened, lies within our remedy.

Queen.

Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you;
 And sure I am two men there are not living
 To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
 To show us so much gentry and good will
 As to expend your time with us awhile,
 For the supply and profit of our hope,
 Your visitation shall receive such thanks
 As fits a king's remembrance.

Ros.

Both your majesties
 Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
 Put your dread pleasures more into command
 Than to entreaty.

Guil.

But we both obey,
 And here give up ourselves, in the full bent,
 To lay our service freely at your feet,
 To be commanded.

Queen.

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

We do beseech you instantly to visit

Our too much changèd son.—Go, you,

[*To the attendants.*]

And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and all the attendants.*]

[*Enter Polonius* L. U. E.]

King.

Thou still hast been the father of good news.



Pol.

Have I, my lord ? Assure you, my good liege,
 I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
 Both to my God, and to my gracious king ;
 And I do think (or else this brain of mine
 Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
 As it hath used to do) that I have found
 The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

King.

O, speak of that ; that do I long to hear.

Pol.

My liege, and madam,— to expostulate
 What majesty should be, what duty is,
 Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
 Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
 Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
 I will be brief:—your noble son is mad:
 Mad call I it ; for, to define true madness,
 What is 't, but to be nothing else but mad ?
 But let that go.

Queen.

More matter, with less art.

Pol.

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
 That he is mad, 't is true : 't is true 't is pity ;
 And pity 't is 't is true : a foolish figure ;
 But farewell it, for I will use no art.
 Mad let us grant him, then : and now remains
 That we find out the cause of this effect,—
 Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
 For this effect defective comes by cause :
 Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
 Perpend.
 I have a daughter,— have, while she is mine,—

Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this : now gather, and surmise.

[*Reads.*

To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia—

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase,—“beautified” is a vile phrase ; but you shall hear. Thus :

[*Reads.*

In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.

Queen.

Came this from Hamlet to her ?

Pol.

Good madam, stay awhile ; I will be faithful.

[*Reads.*

Doubt thou the stars are fire ;
Doubt that the sun doth move ;
Doubt truth to be a liar ;
But never doubt I love.

O, dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers ; I have not art to reckon
my groans : but that I love thee best, O, most best, believe it. Adieu.
Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him,

HAMLET.

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me :
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

King.

But how hath she
Received his love ?

Pol.

What do you think of me ?

King.

As of a man faithful and honourable.

Pol.

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
 When I had seen this hot love on the wing
 (As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
 Before my daughter told me),— what might you,
 Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
 If I had played the desk or table-book ;
 Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb ;
 Or looked upon this love with idle sight ;—
 What might you think ? No, I went round to work,
 And my young mistress thus I did bespeak :
 “ Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star ;
 This must not be ; ” and then I precepts gave her,
 That she should lock herself from his resort,
 Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
 Which done, she took the fruits of my advice ;
 And he, repulsed (a short tale to make),
 Fell into a sadness ; then into a fast ;
 Thence to a watch ; thence into a weakness ;
 Thence to a lightness ; and, by this declension
 Into the madness wherein now he raves,
 And all we wait for.

King.

Do you think 't is this ?

Queen.

It may be— very likely.

Pol.

Hath there been such a time (I 'd fain know that),
 That I have positively said, “ 'T is so,”
 When it proved otherwise ?

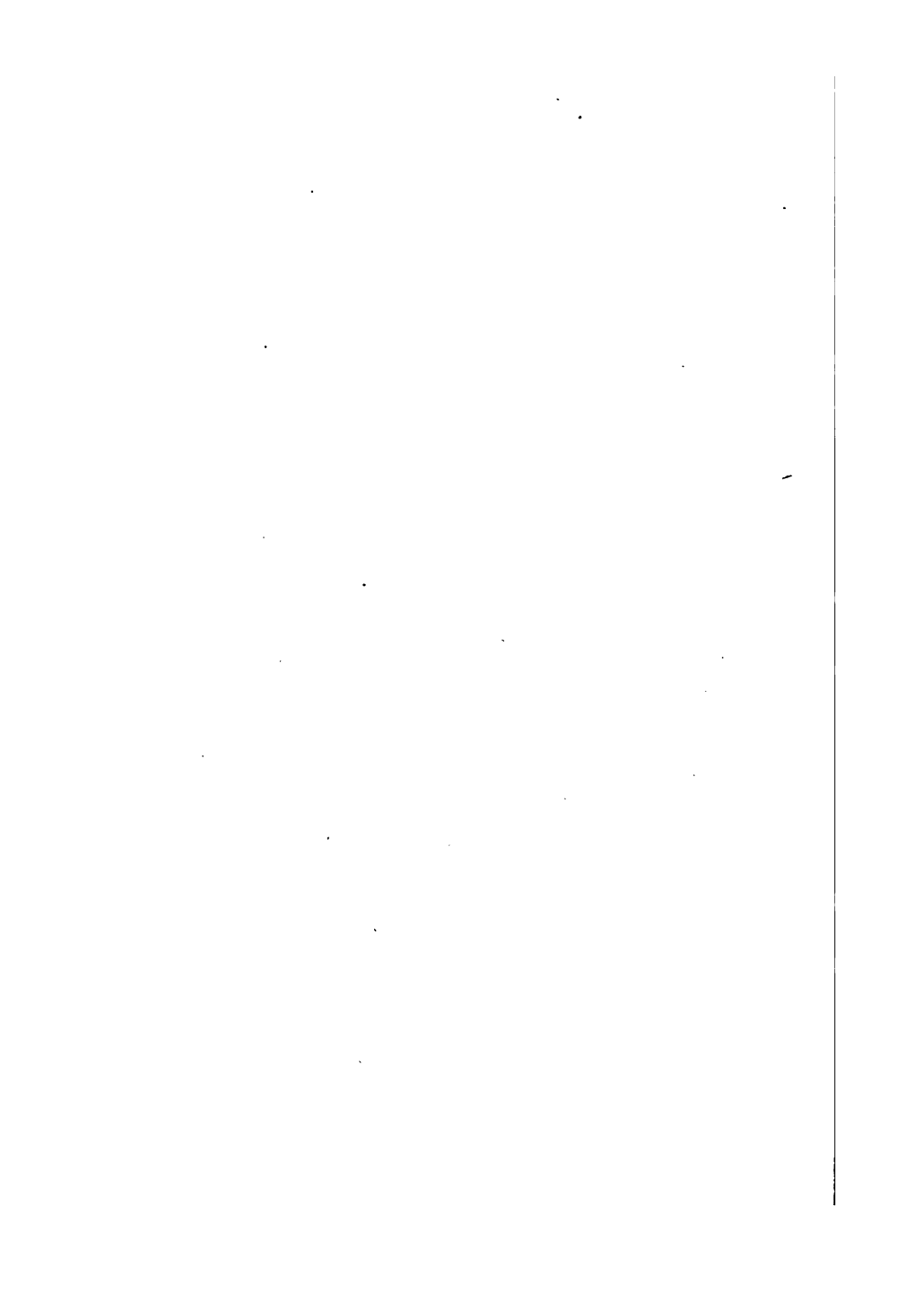
King.

Not that I know.

Pol.

Take this from this, if this be otherwise :

[*Pointing to his head and shoulder.*]



If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

King.

How may we try it further ?

Pol.

You know, sometimes he walks for hours together
Here in the lobby.

Queen.

[*Goes up c.*

So he does, indeed.

Pol.

At such a time I 'll loose my daughter to him :
Be you and I behind an arras then ;
Mark the encounter : if he love her not,
And be not from his reason fallen thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

King.

We will try it.

Queen.

But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes, reading.

Pol.

Away, I do beseech you, both away :
I 'll board him presently.

[*Exeunt King and Queen.*

[*Enter Hamlet, c., reading.*

How does my good Lord Hamlet ?

Hamlet.

Well, [God-a-mercy.]

Pol.

Do you know me, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Excellent well ; you are a fishmonger.

Pol.

Not I, my lord.

Hamlet.

Then I would you were so honest a man.

Pol.

Honest, my lord !

Hamlet.

Ay, sir ; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

Pol.

That 's very true, my lord.

Hamlet.

For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter ? — →

Pol.

I have, my lord.

Hamlet.

— Let her not walk i' the sun : conception is a blessing ; but not as your daughter may conceive :—friend, look to 't.

*Pol.**[Aside.*

Still harping on my daughter : — yet he knew me not at first ; he said I was a fishmonger : ' he is far gone, far gone : and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love ; very near this. ' I 'll speak to him again.—What do you read, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Words, words, words.



Pol.

What is the matter, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Between who ?

Pol.

I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

Hamlet.

Slanders, sir : for the satirical rogue says here, that old men have grey beards ; that their faces are wrinkled ; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum ; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams : all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down ; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.

Pol.

[*Aside.*

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.—
Will you walk out of the air, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Into my grave ?

Pol.

Indeed, that is out o' the air.—[*Aside.*] How pregnant sometimes his replies are ! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.—My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

Hamlet.

You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal,—except my life, except my life, except my life.



Pol.

Fare you well, my lord.

[*Exit Polonius L.**Hamlet.*

These tedious old fools!

[*As Polonius retires, he meets, outside, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.**Pol.*

You go to seek the Lord Hamlet ; there he is. }

Ros.[*To Pol.* } *Within.*

. . . God save you, sir!

[*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern L.**Guil.*

Mine honoured lord!

Ros.

My most dear lord!

Hamlet.

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both? What news?

Ros.

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

Hamlet.

Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true. In the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

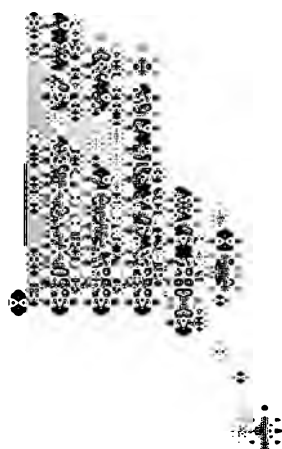
Ros.

To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

Hamlet.

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

6



Guil.

What should we say, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Why, anything—but to the purpose. You were sent for: and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

Ros.

To what end, my lord ?

Hamlet.

That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no ?

Ros. [*Aside to Guildenstern.*

What say you ?

Hamlet. [*Aside.*

Nay, then, I have an eye of you.—If you love me, hold not off.

Guil.

My lord, we were sent for.

Hamlet.

I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moults no feather. I have of late (but wherefore I know not) lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire,—why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how

infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me; ~~no~~, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Ros.

My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

Hamlet.

Why did you laugh, then, when I said, man delights not me?

Ros.

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

Hamlet.

He that plays the king shall be welcome: his majesty shall have tribute of me. — What players are they?

Ros.

Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

Hamlet.

How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways. Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

Ros.

No, indeed, they are not.

Hamlet.

It is not strange; for my uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. There is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[*Trumpet within.*

Guil.

There are the players.

Hamlet.

Gentlemen [*To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*] you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands. You are welcome; but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

Guil.

In what, my dear lord?

Hamlet.

I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

Pol.

[*Within.*

Well be with you, gentlemen!

Hamlet.

Hark you, Guildenstern, that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swathing-clouts.

Ros.

Haply he is the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

Hamlet.

I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it.—You say right, sir; o' Monday morning; 't was so, indeed.

[*Enter Polonius L.*

Pol.

My lord, I have news to tell you.

Hamlet.

My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—

Pol.

The actors are come hither, my lord.

Hamlet.

Buz, buz!

Pol.

Upon mine honour,—

Hamlet.

Then came each actor on his ass,—

Pol.

— The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene-individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

Hamlet.

O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

Pol.

What a treasure had he, my lord?

Hamlet.

Why,

One fair daughter, and no more,
The which he loved passing well.

*Pol.**[Aside.]*

Still on my daughter.

Hamlet.

Am I not in the right, old Jephthah?

Pol.

If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

Hamlet.

Nay, that follows not.

3

(3)

30

8



Pol.

What follows, then, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Why

As by lot, God wot,

and then you know,

It came to pass, as most like it was,—

the first row of the pious chanson will show you more;
for look, my abridgment comes.

[*Enter several Players L.*

You are welcome, masters ; welcome all. Old friend !
Thy face is valanced since I saw thee last ; comest thou
to beard me in Denmark ? Masters, you are all welcome.
We 'll e'en to 't like French falconers, fly at anything we
see : we'll have a speech straight : come, give us a taste of
your quality ; come, a passionate speech.

First Play.

What speech, my lord ?

Hamlet.

I heard thee speak me a speech once,—but it was never
acted ; or, if it was, not above once ; for the play, I
remember, pleased not the million ; 't was caviare to the
general · but it was an excellent play, well digested in the
scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. One
speech in it I chiefly loved : 't was *Æneas'* tale to Dido ;
and thereabout of it, especially, where he speaks of Priam's
slaughter ; if it live in your memory, begin at this line ;—
let me see, let me see ;—

The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast,

—'t is not so : —it begins with Pyrrhus : —

The rugged Pyrrhus,—he, whose sable arms
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble ;
Old grandsire Priam seeks,—



Pol.

'Fore heaven, my lord, well spoken, with good accent
and good discretion.

Hamlet.

So proceed you.

First Play.

Anon he finds him

Striking too short at Greeks; his antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command; unequal matched,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives: in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerv'd father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear; for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood:
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.
But, as we often see, against some storm,
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
As hush as death; anon the dreadful thunder
Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
Arous'd vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forged for proof eterne,
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
Now falls on Priam.—
Out, out, thou strumpet, Fortune! All you gods,
In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends!

Pol.

This is too long.

Hamlet.

It shall to the barber's, with your beard.—Pr'ythee, say
on:—come to Hecuba.

First Play.

But who, O, who had seen the moblèd queen—

Hamlet.

[*With momentary sad pre-occupation: his thought is of his mother.*]

"The moblèd queen."

Pol.

That's good; "moblèd queen" is good.

First Play.

Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
 [With bisson rheum] a clout upon that head
 Where late the diadem stood; and for a robe,
 [About her lank and all o'er-teemèd loins,]
 A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up;—
 Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
 'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounced: ? —
 [But if the gods themselves did see her then
 When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
 The instant burst of clamour that she made
 (Unless things mortal move them not at all),
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
 And passion in the gods.]

Pol.

Look, whether he has not turned his colour, and has tears in 's eyes.—Pray you, no more.

Hamlet.

"T is well; I'll have thee speak out the rest soon.—Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for they are the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time; after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

Pol.

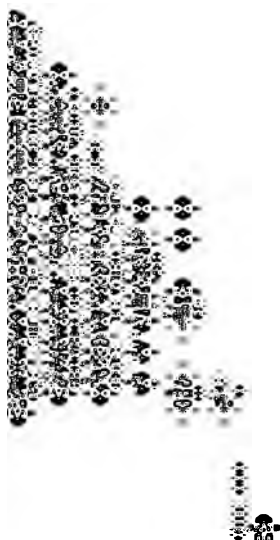
My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

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Hamlet.

Much better, sir ; use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping ? Use them after your own honour and dignity : the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

Pol.

Come, sirs.

Hamlet.

Follow him, friends : we'll hear a play to-morrow.

[*Exit Polonius, with all the players except the first, L.*

Old friend.

[*The First Player pauses in the act of retiring. Hamlet then addresses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

My good friends, I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet then speaks again to the player.*

Can you play the murder of Gonzago ?

First Play.

Ay, my lord.

Hamlet.

We'll have it to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in 't, could you not ?

First Play.

Ay, my lord.

Hamlet.

Very well.—Follow that lord ; and look you mock him not.

[*Exit First Player L.*

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I !
Is it not monstrous, that this player here,

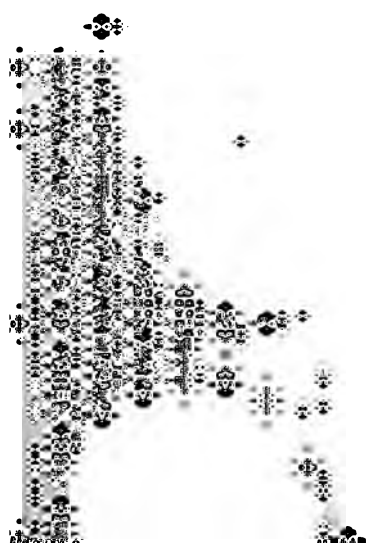


But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,
That, from her working, all his visage wanned;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!

What 's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do,
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;
Make mad the guilty, and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant; and amaze, indeed,
The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain?
Gives me the lie i' the throat,
As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?
Why, I should take it: for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall
To make oppression bitter; or, ere this,
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: — bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a bawd, unpack my heart with words,
And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,
A scullion!

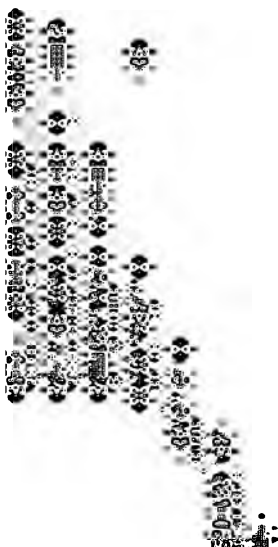
Fie upon it! foh! — About, my brain! I have heard
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul, that presently



They have proclaimed their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I 'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle: I 'll observe his looks;
I 'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me: I 'll have grounds
More relative than this:—the play 's the thing
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king.
[*Exit Hamlet* L.]

CURTAIN.





Act Third.

Scene first. { THE SAME AS IN ACT SECOND. THE KING
AND QUEEN SEATED AT TABLE C., AND
POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, AND
GUILDENSTERN, STANDING NEAR, ARE
DISCOVERED.

King.

And can you, by no drift of circumstance, —
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy ?

Ros.

He does confess he feels himself distracted ;
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

Guil.

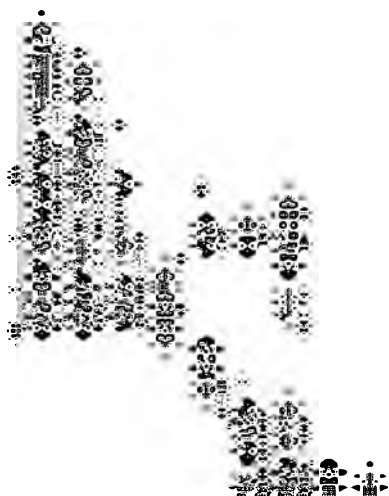
Nor do we find him forward to be sounded ;
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

Queen.

Did you assay him
To any pastime ?

Ros.

Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way : of these we told him ;
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it : they are about the court ;
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.



Pol.

'T is most true :
And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.

King.

With all my heart ; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.—
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

Ros.

We shall, my lord.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern R.*

King.

Sweet Gertrude, leave us too ;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 't were by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia :
Her father and myself,—lawful espials,—
Will so bestow ourselves, that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge ;
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If 't be the affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

[*King retires.*

Queen.

I shall obey you : —
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness : so shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

Oph.

Madam, I wish it may.

[*Exit Queen L.*

Pol.

Ophelia, walk you here.—
 [Gracious, so please you,
 —We will bestow ourselves.— } *To the King.*
 Read on this book; [*To Ophelia.—He gives her a missal.*
 That show of such an exercise may colour
 Your loneliness.—We are oft to blame in this,—
 'T is too much proved,—that, with devotion's visage
 And pious action, we do sugar o'er
 The devil himself.

*King.**[Aside.*

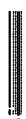
O, 't is too true!
 How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
 The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
 Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it,
 Than is my deed to my most painted word:
 O, heavy burden!]

Pol.

I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.
[Exeunt King and Polonius c., and Ophelia,
slowly, R.

*[Enter Hamlet.**Hamlet.*

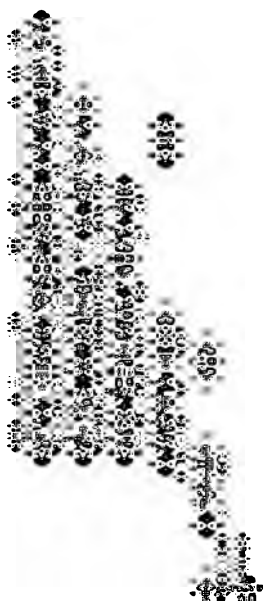
To be, or not to be,—that is the question:—
 Whether 't is nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them?—to die,—to sleep,— ?
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to —'t is a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished. To die,—to sleep.—
 To sleep! perchance to dream:—ay, there 's the rub,
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 Must give us pause: there 's the respect
 That makes calamity of so long life;
 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,



22



22



The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office, and the spurns
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
 When he himself might his quietus make
 With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,—
 The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
 No traveller returns,—puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
 And enterprises of great pith and moment,
 With this regard, their currents turn awry,
 And lose the name of action.—Soft you now!
[*Re-enter Ophelia, reading.*

The fair Ophelia.—Nymph, in thy orisons
 Be all my sins remembered.

Oph.

[*Coldly.* —

Good my lord,
 How does your honour for this many a day?

Hamlet.

[*Going.* —

I humbly thank you; well, well, well.]

Oph.

My lord, I have remembrances of yours,
 That I have longed long to re-deliver;
 I pray you, now receive them.

[*Hamlet here catches a glimpse of the King and Polonius, in their hiding-place at back of the scene.*

Hamlet.

No, not I;
 I never gave you aught.



11

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12

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Oph.

My honoured lord, you know right well you did ;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich : their perfume lost,
Take these again ; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

Hamlet.

Ha, ha ! are you honest ?

Oph.

My lord ?

Hamlet.

Are you fair ?

Oph.

What means your lordship ?

Hamlet.

That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should
admit no discourse to your beauty.

Oph.

Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with
honesty ?

Hamlet.

Ay, truly ; for the power of beauty will sooner transform
honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty
can translate beauty into his likeness : this was sometime
a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love
you once.

Oph.

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet.

You should not have believed me ; for virtue cannot so
inoculate our old stock, but we shall relish of it : I loved
you not.



Oph.

I was the more deceived.

Hamlet.

Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things, that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in.

What should such fellows as I do crawling between heaven and earth? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

Oph.[*Hesitating.*

At home, my lord.

Hamlet.

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house. Farewell.

Oph.

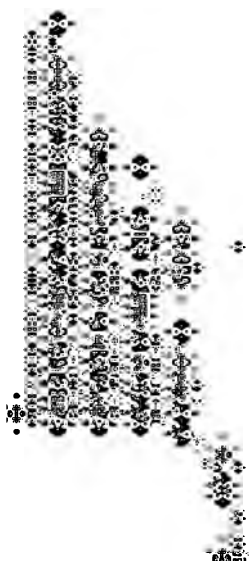
O, help him, you sweet heavens!

Hamlet.

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry,—be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

Oph.

O, heavenly powers, restore him!



Hamlet.

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough ; God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another : you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I 'll no more on 't ; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages : those that are married already, all but one, shall live ; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [*Exit.*]

Oph.

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown !
 The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword ;
 The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
 The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
 The observed of all observers,—quite, quite down !
 And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
 That sucked the honey of his music vows,
 Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
 Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh ;
 That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
 Blasted with ecstasy : O, woe is me,
 To have seen what I have seen, see what I see !

[*Exit Ophelia.*][*Re-enter King and Polonius.*]*King.*

Love ! his affections do not that way tend ;
 Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
 Was not like madness. There 's something in his soul,
 O'er which his melancholy sits on brood ;
 And, I do doubt, the hatch and the disclose
 Will be some danger : which for to prevent,
 I have in quick determination
 Thus set it down : — he shall with speed to England,
 For the demand of our neglected tribute :
 Haply, the seas, and countries different,
 With variable objects, shall expel
 This something-settled matter in his heart ;
 Whereon his brain still beating, puts him thus
 From fashion of himself. What think you on 't ?



4



Pol.

It shall do well ; but yet do I believe
 The origin and commencement of his grief
 Sprung from neglected love.
 My lord, do as you please ;
 But, if you hold it fit, after the play,
 Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
 To show his grief : let her be round with him ;
 And I 'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
 Of all their conference. If she find him not,
 To England send him ; or confine him where
 Your wisdom best shall think.

King.

It shall be so :
 Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.

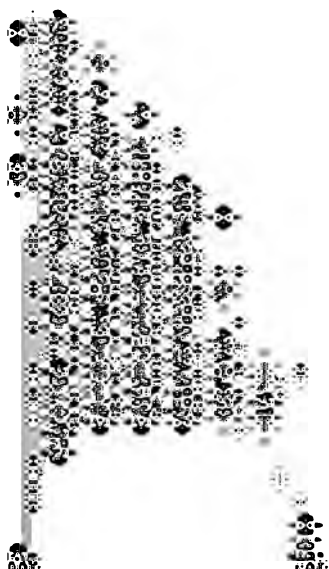
[*Exeunt C.*]

Scene Second.—A HALL IN THE CASTLE [FIRST GROOVES].

[N. B.—*During this scene, set the Dais with chairs
 R, Platform L, chair and stool C.*]

[*Enter Hamlet and First Player.*]*Hamlet.*

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue : but if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus ; but use all gently : for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings ; who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise : I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant : it out-herods Herod : pray you, avoid it.



First Player.

I warrant your honour.

Hamlet.

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor : suit the action to the word, the word to the action ; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature : for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature ; to show, virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now, this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve ; the censure of the which one must, in your allowance, o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play,—and heard others praise, and that highly,—not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor *man*, have so strutted and bellowed, that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made them, and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

First Player.

I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

Hamlet.

O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them : for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too ; though, in the meantime, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered : that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready.

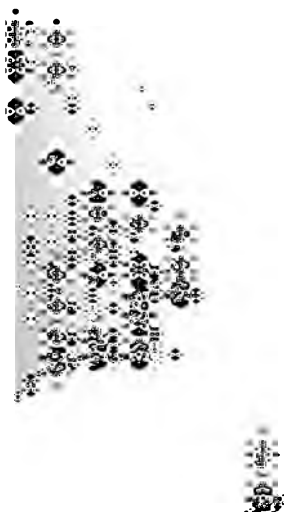
Horatio !

[*Exit Player.*
[*Enter Horatio.*

Horatio.

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

05



Hamlet.

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal.

Horatio.

O, my dear lord,—

Hamlet.

Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revènue hast, but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp;
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath sealed thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blessed are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well co-mingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. — Something too much of this.
There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death:
I pr'ythee, when thou seest that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul,
Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damndèd ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note:
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And, after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

Horatio.

Well, my lord.

[*March, pp.**Hamlet.*

They are coming to the play. Get you a place.
 I must be idle. [*Exeunt. Scene changes.*

2010
 2011
Scene Third.—SAME AS SCENE FIRST.

[*Guards, lords, and ladies discovered. Danish march. Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Horatio, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Hamlet.*

King. [*Ascends throne R.*

How fares our cousin Hamlet ?

Hamlet.

Excellent, i' faith ; of the chameleon's dish : I eat the air,
 promise-crammed : you cannot feed capons so.

King.

I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet ; these words
 are not mine.

Hamlet.

No, nor mine now. [*To Polonius.*] My lord, you
 played once in the university, you say ?

Pol.

That did I, my lord ; and was accounted a good actor.

Hamlet.

And what did you enact ?

Pol.

I did enact Julius Cæsar : I was killed i' the Capitol ;
 Brutus killed me.

Hamlet.

It was a brute part of him [*Aside*] to kill so capital a calf there.—Be the players ready?

Ros.

Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

Queen.

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

Hamlet.

No, good mother, here 's metal more attractive.

Pol.

[*To the King.*]

O, ho! do you mark that?

Hamlet.

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[*Lying down at Ophelia's feet.*]

Oph.

You are merry, my lord.

Hamlet.

O, your only jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

Oph.

Nay, 't is twice two months, my lord.

Hamlet.

So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. Two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there 's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year: but, by 'r lady, he must build churches, then.

Oph.

What means the play, my lord?

Hamlet.

Miching mallecho ; it means mischief.

Oph.

But what is the argument of the play ?

[*Enter Second Actor, as Prologue.*

Hamlet.

We shall know by this fellow.

Second Actor.

For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

Hamlet.

Is this a prologue or the posy of a ring ?

Oph.

'T is brief, my lord.

Hamlet.

As woman's love.

[*This reference is to the Queen, and—mournfully—
to the evanescence of all love.*

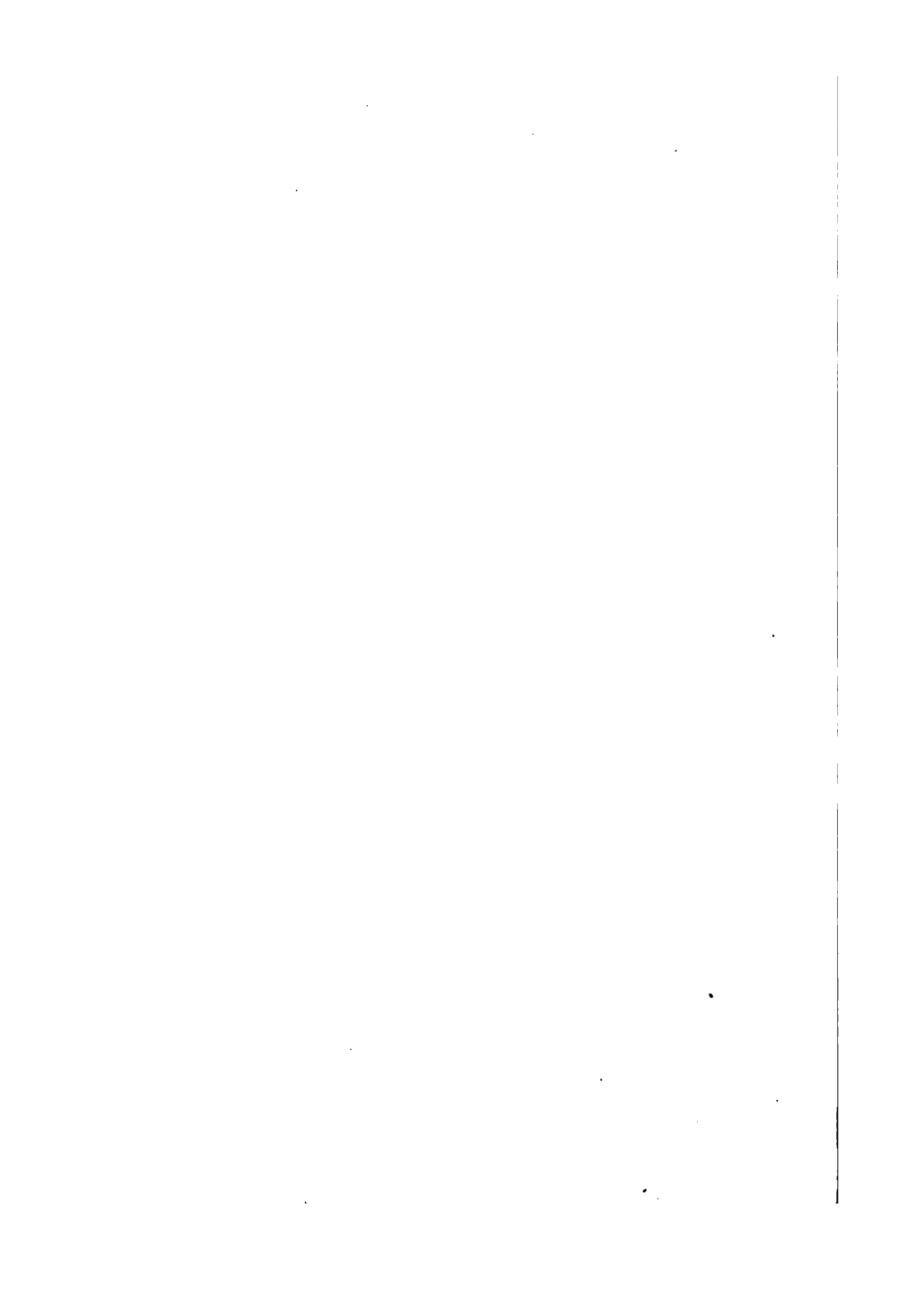
[*Enter a King and a Queen.*

P. King.

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' car gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbèd ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts, and Hymen did our hands,
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

P. Queen.

So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done !
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must :
For women's fear and love hold quantity ;



In neither aught, or in extremity.
 Now, what my love is proof hath made you know ;
 And as my love is sized, my fear is so :
 Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear ;
 Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

P. King.

Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too ;
 My operant powers their functions leave to do :
 And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
 Honored, beloved ; and haply, one as kind
 For husband shalt thou —

P. Queen.

O, confound the rest !
 Such love must needs be treason in my breast :
 In second husband let me be accurst !
 None wed the second but who killed the first.

Hamlet.

[*Aside.*

Wormwood, wormwood.

P. King.

I do believe you think what now you speak ;
 But what we do determine oft we break.
 Purpose is but the slave to memory ;
 Of violent birth, but poor validity :
 Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree ;
 But fall, unshaken, when they mellow be.
 Our wills and fates do so contràry run,
 That our devices still are overthrown ;
 Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own :
 So think thou wilt no second husband wed ;
 But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

P. Queen.

Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light !
 Sport and repose lock from me day and night !
 To desperation turn my trust and hope !
 An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope !
 Each opposite, that blanks the face of joy,
 Meet what I would have well, and it destroy !
 Both here and hence, pursue me lasting strife,
 If once a widow, ever I be wife !

P. King.

'T is deeply sworn.



Hamlet.

If she should break it now !

P. King.

Sweet, leave me here awhile ;
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep.

*[Sleeps.]**P. Queen.*

Sleep rock thy brain ;
And never come mischance between us twain !

*[Exit.]**Hamlet.**[To the Queen.]*

Madam, how like you this play ?

Queen.

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

Hamlet.

O, but she'll keep her word.

King.

Have you heard the argument ? Is there no offence
in 't ?

Hamlet.

No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest ; no offence i'
the world.

King.

What do you call the play ?

Hamlet.

The Mouse-trap. Marry, how ? Tropically. This play
is the image of a murder done in Vienna : Gonzago is the
duke's name ; his wife, Baptista : you shall see anon ; 't is
a knavish piece of work : but what o' that ? your majesty,
and we that have free souls, it touches us not : let the
galled jade wince ! our withers are unwrung.

[Enter Second Actor, as Lucianus.]

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

Oph.

You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

Hamlet.

I could interpret between you and your love—*[Aside]* if I could see the puppets dallying. Begin, murderer; leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come :— the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.

Lucianus.

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property,
On wholesome life usurp immediately.

[Pours the poison into the sleeper's ear.]

Hamlet.

He poisons him i' the garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and written in very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

King.

Give o'er the play! Away!

[General alarm and confusion. As the King rises, the players hurriedly quit the platform; Ophelia runs to Polonius; and the whole throng rushes out, after the King and Queen, leaving Hamlet and Horatio alone together.]

Hamlet.

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungallèd play;

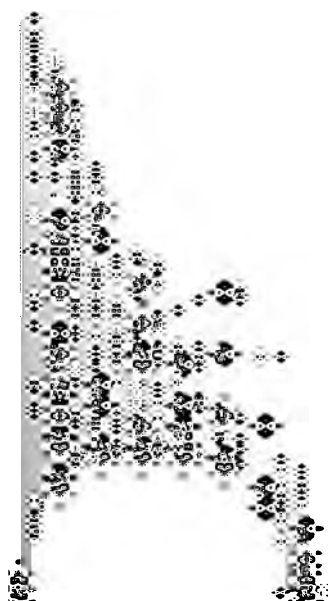
For some must watch, while some must sleep:

So runs the world away.

O, good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

Horatio.

Very well, my lord.



Hamlet.

Upon the talk of the poisoning,—

Horatio.

I did very well note him.

Hamlet.

Ah, ha!—Come, some music! come, the recorders!
[Come, some music!]
[Exit Horatio R.
[Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern L.

Guil.

Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

Hamlet.

Sir, a whole history.

Guil.

The king, sir,—

Hamlet.

Ay, sir, what of him?

Guil.

Is, in his retirement, marvellous distempered.

Hamlet.

With drink, sir?

Guil.

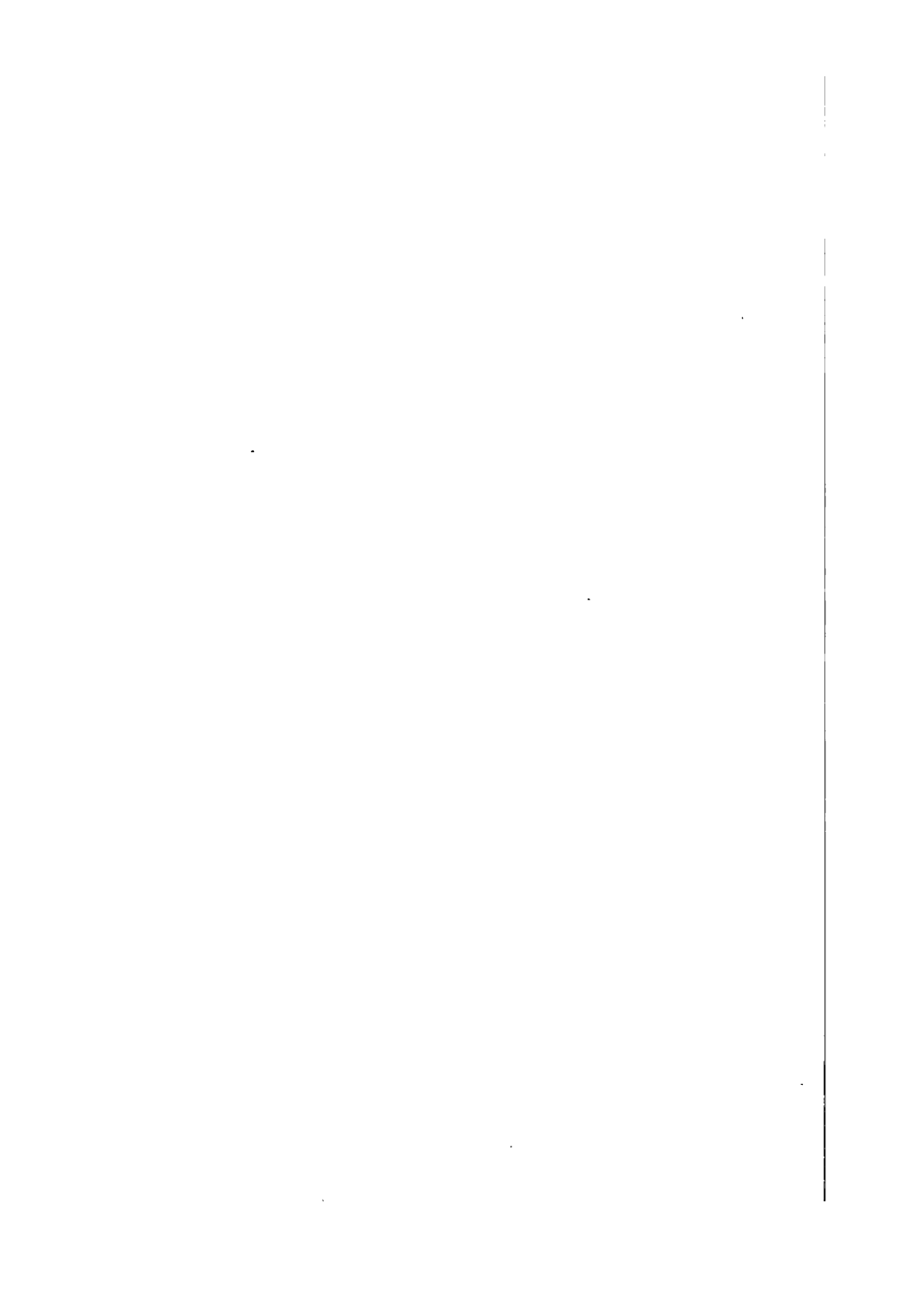
No, my lord, with choler.

Hamlet.

Your wisdom would show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation might perhaps plunge him into more choler.

Guil.

Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair.



Hamlet.

I am tame, sir :—pronounce.

Guil.

The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit,
hath sent me to you.

Hamlet.

You are welcome.

Guil.

Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right
breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome
answer, I will do your mother's commandment : if not,
your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

Hamlet.

Sir, I cannot.

Guil.

What, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Make you a wholesome answer ; my wit 's diseased :
but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command ;
— therefore no more, but to the matter : my mother, you
say,—

Ros.

Then thus she says ; your behaviour hath struck her into
amazement and admiration.

Hamlet.

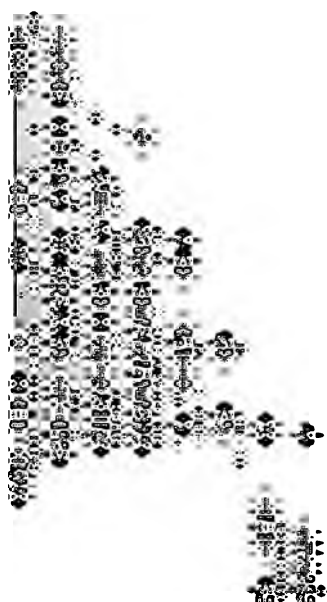
O, wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother !—
But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admira-
tion ? Impart.

Ros.

She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go
to bed.

Hamlet.

We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have
you any further trade with us ?



Ros.

My lord, you once did love me.

Hamlet.

So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

Ros.

Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

Hamlet.

Sir, I lack advancement.

Ros.

How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

Hamlet.

Ay, sir, but "While the grass grows,"—the proverb is something musty.

[Enter Horatio with two musicians.]

O, the recorders:—let me see one.

[Hamlet takes one of the flutes. Guildenstern passes to the R. of Hamlet, as if to overhear what may pass between him and Horatio.]

To withdraw with you.

[Exeunt Horatio and the musicians R.]

Why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

Guil.

O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

Hamlet.

I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Guil.

My lord, I cannot.



Hamlet.

I pray you.

Guil.

Believe me, I cannot.

*Hamlet.*I do beseech *you*.*Ros.*

I know no touch of it, my lord.

Hamlet.

'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

Guil.

But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

Hamlet.

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sdeath, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you may fret me, you cannot play upon me.

[*Enter Polonius* L.]*Pol.*

[My lord! my lord!

Hamlet.

God bless you, sir!

Pol.

My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.

Hamlet.

Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Pol.

By the mass, and 't is like a camel, indeed.

Hamlet.

Methinks it is like a weasel.

Pol.

It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet.

Or like a whale ?

Pol.

Very like a whale.

Hamlet.

Then will I come to my mother by-and-by.—They fool me to the top of my bent.—I will come by-and-by.

Pol.

I will say so.

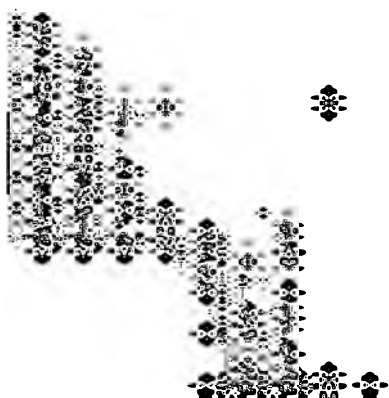
Hamlet.

By-and-by is easily said, sir. [*Exit Polonius.*]—Leave me, friends.

[*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*]

'T is now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.—
O, heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

[*Exit Hamlet.*]



Scene Fourth. { A ROOM IN THE CASTLE. [FIRST
GROOVES.]

[Enter, L., King, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

King.

I like him not; nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;
I your commission will forthwith despatch,
And he to England shall along with you:
Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;
For we will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.

Ros., Guil.

We will haste us.

[Exeunt, R., Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

[Enter Polonius L.

Pol.

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,
To hear the process; I'll warrant she'll tax him home:
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech of vantage. Fare you well, my liege:
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

King.

Thanks, dear my lord.

[Exit Polonius L.

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal, eldest curse upon 't,—
A brother's murder!—Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,

And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,—
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Where to serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence?
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force,—
 To be forestallèd ere we come to fall,
 Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up;
 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder!—
 That cannot be; since I am still possessed
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,—
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
 May one be pardoned, and retain the offence?
 In the corrupted currents of this world
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
 And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law: but 't is not so above;
 There is no shuffling,—there the action lies
 In his true nature; and we ourselves compelled,
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
 To give in evidence. What then? what rests?
 Try what repentance can: what can it not?
 Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
 O, wretched state! O, bosom black as death!
 O, limèd soul, that, struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! make assay:
 Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart, with strings of steel,
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!
 All may be well.

[Retires and kneels at Shrine c.

[The following speech is sometimes omitted.]

[Enter Hamlet.

Hamlet.

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;
 And now I'll do 't;—and so he goes to heaven—
 And so am I revenged?—that would be scanned:
 A villain kills my father; and, for that,
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send
 To heaven.

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Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
 He took my father grossly full of bread ;
 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May ;
 And how his audit stands who knows save heaven ?
 But, in our circumstance and course of thought,
 'T is heavy with him : and am I, then, revenged,
 To take him in the purging of his soul,
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage ?

No.

Up, sword ; and know thou a more horrid hent :
 When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage ;
 At gaming, swearing ; or about some act
 That has no relish of salvation in 't ;—
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven ;
 And that his soul may be as damned and black
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays :
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

[*Exit Hamlet.*

[*The King rises and advances.*

King.

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below :
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

[*Exit the King.*

Scene Fifth. { THE QUEEN'S PRIVATE APARTMENT IN
 THE CASTLE. DIM LIGHT. THE QUEEN,
 SEATED, AND POLONIUS, DISCOVERED.

Pol.

He will come straight. Look you lay home to him :
 Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
 And that your grace hath screened and stood between
 Much heat and him. I 'll sounce me e'en here.
 Pray you, be round with him.

Hamlet.

[*Within.*

Mother, mother, mother !



Queen.

I 'll warrant you;

Fear me not : — withdraw, I hear him coming.

[Polonius conceals himself behind the arras.]

[Enter Hamlet.]

Hamlet.

Now, mother, what 's the matter ?

Queen.

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet.

Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen.

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet.

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Queen.

Why, how now, Hamlet !

Hamlet.

What 's the matter now ?

Queen.

Have you forgot me ?

Hamlet.

No, by the rood, not so :

You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife ;

And,—would it were not so ! — you are my mother.

Queen.

Nay, then, I 'll set those to you that can speak.

Hamlet.

You shall not budge.

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

Queen.

What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?—
Help, help, ho!

Pol.

[*Within.*

What, ho! help, help, help!

Hamlet.

[*Draws sword.*

How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

[*Makes a pass through the arras.*

Pol.

[*Within.*

O, I am slain!

Queen.

O, me, what hast thou done?

Hamlet.

Nay, I know not:
Is it the king?

Queen.

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Hamlet.

A bloody deed!—almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen.

As kill a king!

Hamlet.

Ay, lady, 't was my word.

[*Lifts up the arras, and sees Polonius.*

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better.

[*Queen, in great agitation, seems about to speak.*

Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down,
And let me wring your heart: for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff;
If damnèd custom have not brazed it so,
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

Queen.

What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

Hamlet.

Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul; and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

Queen.

Ah me, what act?

Hamlet.

Look here, upon this picture, and on this,—
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form, indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man:
This was your husband.—Look you now, what follows:
Here is your husband; like a mildewed ear,
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes?
You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment

Would stoop from this to this?
 O, shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
 If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
 And melt in her own fire.

Queen.

O Hamlet, speak no more:
 Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
 And there I see such black and grainèd spots
 As will not leave their tinct.
 No more, sweet Hamlet!

Hamlet.

A murderer and a villain;
 A slave, that is not twentieth part the tithe
 Of your precedent lord; a Vice of kings;
 A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
 That from a shelf the precious diadem stole——

Queen.

No more!

Hamlet.

A king of shreds and patches,—

[*Enter Ghost R.*

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,
 You heavenly guards!—What would your gracious figure?

Queen.

Alas! he 's mad!

Hamlet.

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
 That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
 The important acting of your dread command?
 O, say!



Ghost.

Do not forget: this visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:
O, step between her and her fighting soul,—
Speak to her, Hamlet.

Hamlet.

How is it with you, lady?

Queen.

Alas! how is 't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
O, gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of your distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

Hamlet.

On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable.—Do not look upon me;
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for blood.

Queen.

To whom do you speak this?

Hamlet.

Do you see nothing—there?

Queen.

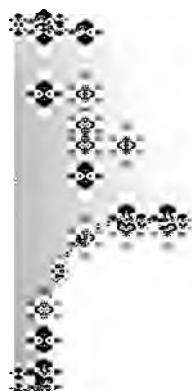
Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

Hamlet.

Nor did you nothing hear?

Queen.

No, nothing but ourselves.



Hamlet.

Why, look you there ! look, how it steals away !
 My father, in his habit as he lived !
 Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal !
[Exit Ghost L.

Queen. [In extreme terror.

This is the very coinage of your brain :
 This bodiless creation ecstasy
 Is very cunning in.

Hamlet.

Ecstasy !
 My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
 And makes as healthful music : it is not madness
 That I have uttered : bring me to the test,
 And I the matter will re-word ; which madness
 Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
 Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
 That not your trespass, but my madness speaks :
 It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
 Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
 Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven ;
 Repent what 's past ; avoid what is to come ;

Queen.

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Hamlet.

O, throw away the worser part of it,
 And live the purer with the other half.
 Good night : but go not to my uncle's bed ;
 Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
 Once more, good night :
[The Queen raises her hands as if to bless her son.
Hamlet checks the motion and recoils from her.
 And when you are desirous to be blessed,

I 'll blessing beg of you.—For this same lord,

[*Pointing to Polonius.*]

I do repent :

I will bestow him, and will answer well

The death I gave him. So, again, good night.—

I must be cruel, only to be kind :

Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.

CURTAIN.



Act Fourth.

Scene First.—A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

[*Enter King.*

King.

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose !
Yet must not we put the strong law on him :
He 's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment but their eyes ;
And where 't is so, the offender's scourge is weighed,
But never the offence.

[*Enter Rosencrantz.*

How now ! what hath befallen ?

Ros.

Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

King.

But where is he ?

Ros.

Without, my lord ; guarded, to know your pleasure.

King.

Bring him before us.

Ros.

Ho, Guildenstern ! bring in my lord.

[*Enter Hamlet, guarded, and Guildenstern.*

King.

Now, Hamlet, where 's Polonius ?

Hamlet.

At supper.

King.

At supper ! where ?

Hamlet.

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten : a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.

King.

Where is Polonius ?

Hamlet.

In heaven : send thither to see : if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But, indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

King.

[*To Guildenstern.*

Go seek him there.

Hamlet.

He will stay till you come.

[*Exit Guildenstern.*

King.

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—
 Which we do tender, as we deeply grieve
 For that which thou hast done,— must send thee hence
 With fiery quickness : therefore prepare thyself ;
 The barque is ready, and the wind at help,
 The associates tend, and everything is bent
 For England.

Hamlet.

For England !

King.

Ay, Hamlet.

Hamlet.

Good.

King.

So is it, if thou knewest our purposes.



Hamlet.

I see a cherub that sees them.—But, come; for England!—Farewell, dear mother.

King.

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Hamlet.

My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother.—Come, for England!

[*Exit Hamlet, with guards.*]

King.

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
 Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night;
 Away! for everything is sealed and done
 That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.

[*Exit Rosencrantz.*]

And, England, if my love thou holdest in prize,
 Thou mayest not coldly estimate at naught
 My sovereign process; which imports at full,
 By letters conjuring to that effect,
 The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
 For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
 And thou must cure me: till I know 't is done,
 Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

[*Exit King. Scene changes.*]

Scene Second.—A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.

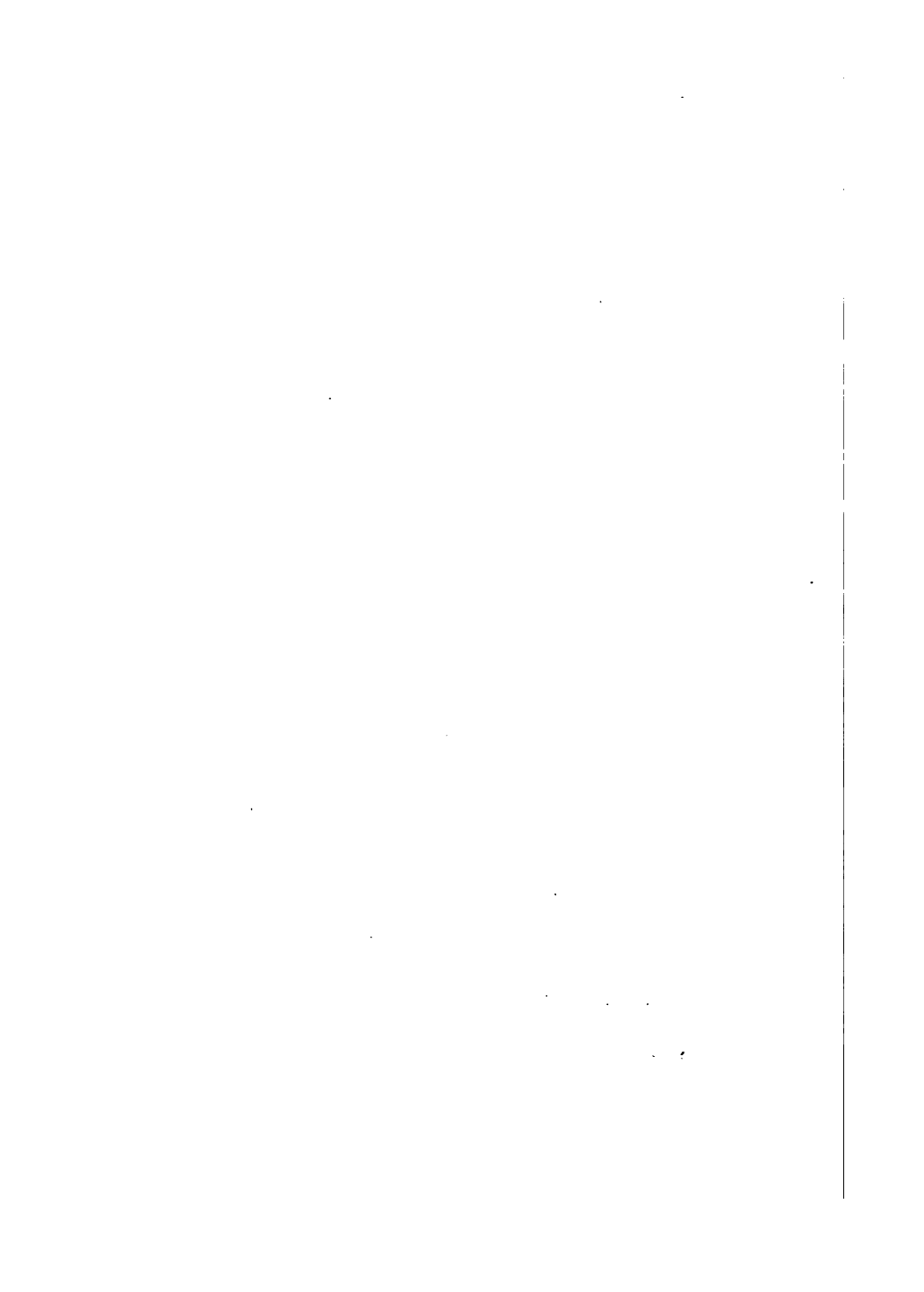
[*Enter Queen and Marcellus c.*]

Queen.

I will not speak with her.

Mar.

She is importunate; indeed, distract:
 Her mood will needs be pitied.



Queen.

What would she have?

Mar.

'T were good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

Queen.

Let her come in.

[Exit Marcellus.]

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

*[Enter Marcellus with Ophelia c.]**Oph.*

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

Queen.

How now, Ophelia!

*Oph.**[Sings.]*

How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandle shoon.

Queen.

Alas! sweet lady, what imports this song?

Oph.

Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[Sings.]

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

Queen.

Nay, but, Ophelia,—



Pray you, mark.

Oph.

[*Enter King L.*

Queen.

Alas! look here, my lord.

Oph.

[*Sings.*

White his shroud as the mountain snow,
Larded with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers.

King.

How do you, pretty lady?

Oph.

Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter: Lord! we know what we are, but we know not what we may be.

King.

Conceit upon her father.

Oph.

Pray you, let 's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this: [*Sings.*

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.

King.

How long hath she been thus?

Oph.

I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach!—Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night. [*Exit Ophelia c.*



King.

Follow her, close ; give her good watch, I pray you.

[*Exit Marcellus.*

O, this is the poison of deep grief ; it springs
All from her father's death. O, Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.

[*A noise within.*

Queen.

Alack, what noise is this ?

King.

Where are my Switzers ? Let them guard the door.

[*Speaking off c.*

[*Enter Marcellus.*

What is the matter ?

Mar.

Save yourself, my lord :

The young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord ;
They cry, " Choose we ; Laertes shall be king ! "
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds,
" Laertes shall be king, Laertes king ! "

[*Exit Marcellus. Noise within. Enter Laertes, armed.*

Laer.

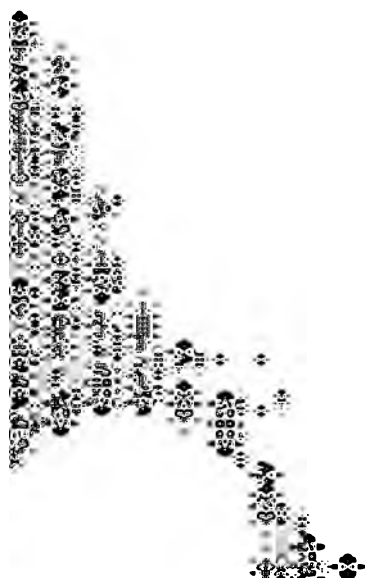
O, thou vile king,
Give me my father !

Queen.

Calmly, good Laertes.

Laer.

That drop of blood that 's calm proclaims me bastard ;
Cries cuckold to my father ; brands the harlot
Even here, between the chaste unsmirch'd brows
Of my true mother.



King.

What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?—
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would.—
Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed:—let him go, Gertrude:—
[Speak, man.]

Laer.

Where is my father?

King.

Dead.

Queen.

But not by him.

King.

Let him demand his fill.

Laer.

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:
To hell, allegiance! to this point I stand,—
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged
Most th'roughly for my father.

King.

Who shall stay you?

Laer.

My will, not all the world:
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

King.

Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge,
That, sweepstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

Laer.

None but his enemies.

King.

Will you know them, then ?

Laer.

To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms ;
 And, like the kind, life-rendering pelican,
 Repast them with my blood.

King.

Why, now you speak
 Like a good child and a true gentleman.
 That I am guiltless of your father's death,
 And am most sensibly in grief for it,
 It shall as level to your judgment 'pear
 As day does to your eye.

VOICES OUTSIDE.

Let her come in !

Laer.

How now ! what noise is that ?

[*The Queen sits L. Re-enter Ophelia.*]

O, heat, dry up my brains ! tears seven times salt,
 Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eyes !—
 By Heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,
 Till our scale turn the beam. } O, rose of May !
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia !—
 O, heavens ! is't possible, a young maid's wits
 Should be as mortal as an old man's life ?

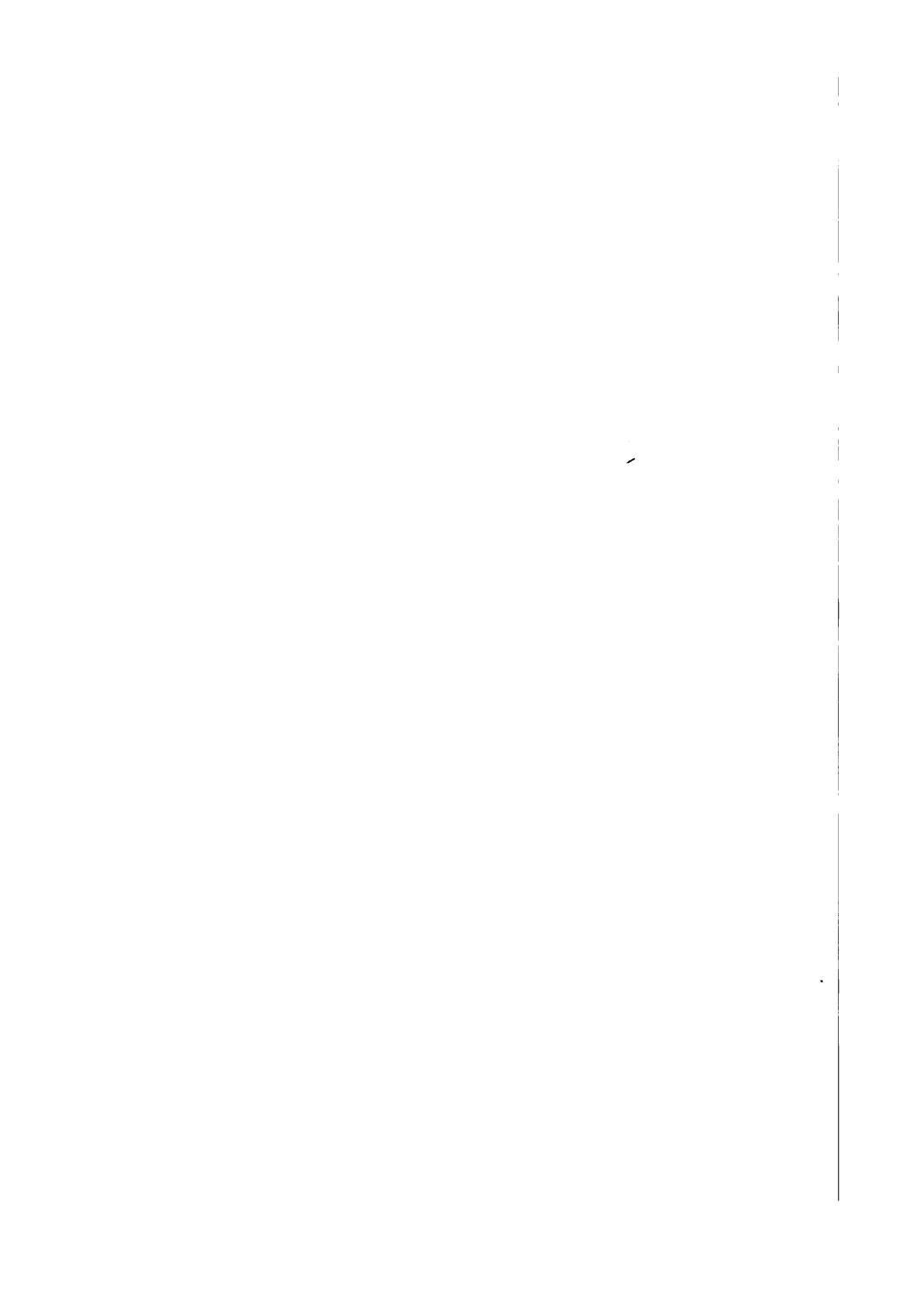
Oph.[*Sings.*]

They bore him barefaced on the bier ;
 And on his grave rained many a tear,—

Fare you well, my dove !

Laer.

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,
 It could not move thus.



Oph.

You must sing, "Down a-down, an you call him a-down-a." O, how the wheel becomes it! 'Twas the false steward, that stole his master's daughter.

Laer.

This nothing 's more than matter.

Oph.

There 's rosemary, that 's for remembrance ; pray, love, remember ; and there is pansies, that 's for thoughts.

Laer.

A document in madness,—thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Oph.

There 's fennel for you, and columbines :—there 's rue for you ; and here 's some for me :—we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays :—you may wear your rue with a difference.—There 's a daisy :—I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died :—they say he made a good end,—

[*Sings.*

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.—

Laer.

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

Oph.[*Sings.*

And will he not come again ?
And will he not come again ?
No, no, he is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
He never will come again.

His beard was white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll :
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan :
God ha' mercy on his soul !

And of all Christian souls, I pray God.—God be wi' you.
[*Exit Ophelia and Queen.*

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Laer.

Do you see this, O Heaven ?

King.

Laertes, I must còmmune with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touched, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction ; but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

Laer.

Let this be so ;
His means of death, his obscure funeral,—
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,—
Cry to be heard, as 't were from heaven to earth,
That I must call 't in question.

King.

So you shall ;
And where th' offence is let the great axe fall.
Hamlet, who hath your noble father slain,
Pursues my life.—
How now ! what news ?

[*Enter Bernardo.*
[*To Bernardo.*

Ber.

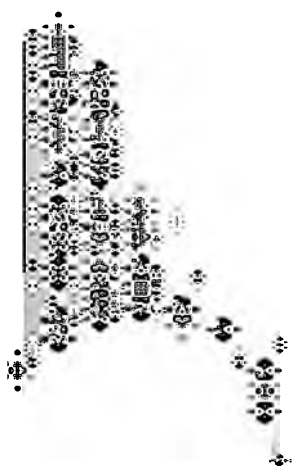
Letters, my lord, from Hamlet :
This to your majesty ; this to the queen.

King.

From Hamlet ! who brought them ?

Ber.

Sailors, my lord, they say ; I saw them not.



King.

Laertes, you shall hear them.—
Leave us.

[*Exit Bernardo.*]

[*Reads.*] High and mighty,—You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return.

HAMLET.

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laer.

Know you the hand?

King.

'T is Hamlet's character:—"Naked,"—
And in a postscript here, he says, "alone."
Can you advise me?

Laer.

I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
"Thus diddest thou."

King.

If it be so, Laertes,—
Will you be ruled by me?

Laer.

Ay, my lord;
-- So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

King.

To thine own peace. If he be now returned,—
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it,—I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice,
And call it accident.



10



Laer.

My lord, I will be ruled ;
 The rather, if you could devise it so,
 That I might be the organ.

King.

It falls right.
 You have been talked of, since your travel, much,
 And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
 Wherein, they say, you shine.

Laer.

What part is that, my lord ?

King.

A very riband in the cap of youth,
 Yet needful too ;
 Here, two months since,
 There came a gentleman of Normandy,—
 Who gave you such a masterly report,
 For art and exercise in your defence,
 And for your rapier most especially,
 That he cried out, 't would be a sight indeed,
 If one could match you.
 Sir, this report of his
 Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy,
 That he could nothing do but wish and beg
 Your sudden coming o'er, to play with you.
 Now, out of this,—

Laer.

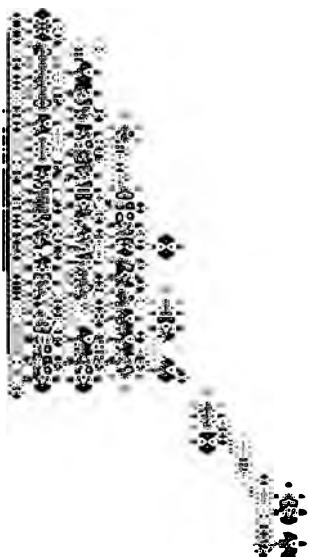
What out of this, my lord ?

King.

Laertes, was your father dear to you ?
 Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,
 A face without a heart ?

Laer.

Why ask you this ?



King.

Hamlet comes back : what would you undertake,
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words ?

Laer.

To cut his throat i' the church.

King.

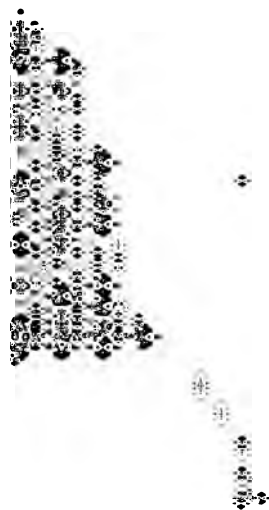
No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize ;
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet, returned, shall know you are come home :
We 'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you ; bring you, in fine, together,
And wager on your heads : he, being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils ; so that, with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and, in a pass of practice,
Requite him for your father.

Laer.

I will do 't :
And, for that purpose, I 'll anoint my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank,
So mortal, that but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratched withal : I 'll touch my point
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

King.

Let 's further think of this ;
We 'll make a solemn wager on your connings.
When in your motion you are hot and dry
(As make your bouts more violent to that end),



And that he calls for drink, I 'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce ; whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there.

[*Enter Queen L.*

Queen.

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow :—your sister's drowned, Laertes.

Laertes.

Drowned ! O, where ?

Queen.

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream ;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples.
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke ;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook.

Laer.

I forbid my tears : but yet
It is our trick ; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will.
Adieu, my lord :
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly drowns it.

[*Exit.*

CURTAIN.



Act Fifth.

Scene First. { A CHURCHYARD. TWO GRAVE-DIGGERS,
WITH SPADES, ETC., DISCOVERED.

First G. D.

Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks
her own salvation ?

Second G. D.

I tell thee she is; and therefore make her grave straight:
the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

First G. D.

How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own
defence ?

Second G. D.

Why, 't is found so.

First G. D.

It must be *se offendendo* ; it cannot be else. For here
lies the point : if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an
act : and an act hath three branches ; it is, to act, to do,
and to perform : argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

Second G. D.

Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,—

First G. D.

Give me leave. Here lies the water ; good : here stands
the man ; good : if the man go to this water, and drown
himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,—mark you that ; but
if the water come to him, and drown him, he drowns not
himself : argal, he that is not guilty of his own death
shortens not his own life.



Second G. D.

But is this law ?

First G. D.

Ay, marry, is 't ; crowner's-quest law

Second G. D.

Will you ha' the truth on 't ? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

First G. D.

Why, there thou sayst : and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian.— Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers : they hold up Adam's profession.

Second G. D.

Was he a gentleman ?

First G. D.

He was the first that ever bore arms.

Second G. D.

Why, he had none.

First G. D.

What ! art a heathen ? How dost thou understand the Scripture ? The Scripture says, Adam digged : could he dig without arms ? I 'll put another question to thee : if thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

Second G. D.

Go to.

First G. D.

What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter ?

Second G. D.

The gallows-maker ; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

First G. D.

I like thy wit well, in good faith: the gallows does well; but how does it well? it does well to those that do ill: now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church: argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come.

Second G. D.

Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?

First G. D.

Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

Second G. D.

Marry, now I can tell.

First G. D.

To't.

Second G. D.

Mass, I cannot tell.

First G. D.

Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and, when you are asked this question next, say, a grave-maker;—the houses that he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoop of liquor.

[*Exit Second G. D.*

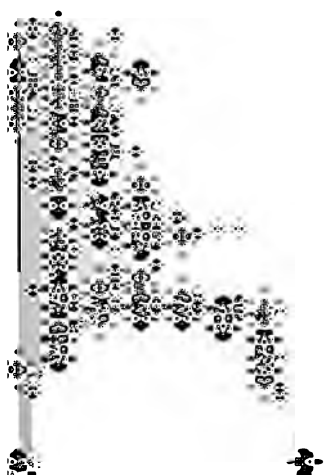
First G. D. [*Digging and singing.*

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, O, the time, for, ah! my behove,
O, methought there was nothing meet.

[*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

Hamlet.

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?



Horatio.

Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

Hamlet.

'T is e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

First G. D.[*Sings.*

But age, with his stealing steps,
Hath clawed me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me intil the land,
As if I had never been such.

[*Throws up a skull.**Hamlet.*

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: how the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! This might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'er-reaches; one that would circumvent Heaven, might it not?

Horatio.

It might, my lord.

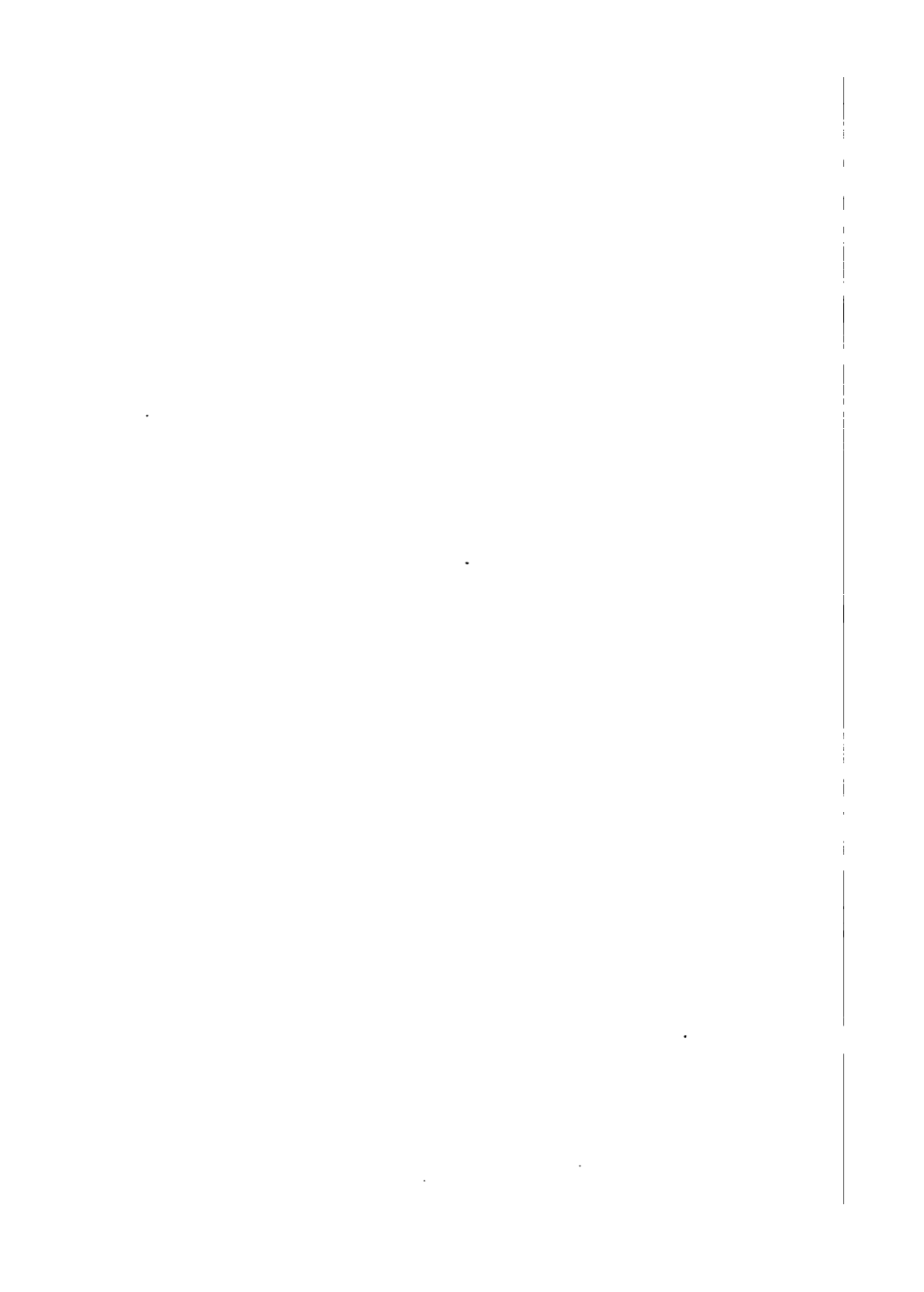
[*First G. D. throws bones from the grave, one by one, with his hands, tossing them.**Hamlet.*

Did these bones cost no more the breeding, but to play at loggats with them? mine ache to think on't.

First G. D.[*Sings and digs.*

A pick-axe and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet:
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

[*Throws up another skull. The attention of the Grave-Digger is particularly drawn to this skull by the remnant of a leather fool's cap which adheres to it, and by which he recognizes the skull as that of Yorick. He sets this skull apart from the other.*



Hamlet.

There 's another : why may not that be the skull of a lawyer ? Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks ? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery ? I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave 's this, sirrah ?

First G. D.

Mine, sir.—

[*Sings.*

O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Hamlet.

I think it be thine, indeed ; for thou liest in 't.

First G. D.

You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours : for my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

Hamlet.

Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't, and say it is thine : 't is for the dead, not for the quick ; therefore thou liest.

First G. D.

'T is a quick lie, sir ; 't will away again, from me to you.

Hamlet.

What man dost thou dig it for ?

First G. D.

For no man, sir.

Hamlet.

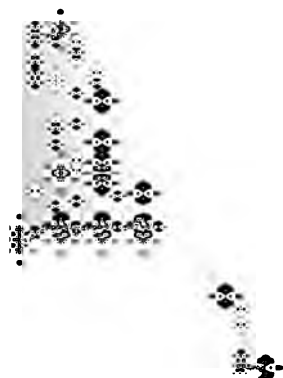
What woman, then ?

First G. D.

For none, neither.

Hamlet.

Who is to be buried in 't ?



First G. D.

One that was a woman, sir ; but, rest her soul, she 's dead.

Hamlet. [*To Horatio.*

How absolute the knave is ! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. [*To First G. D.*] How long hast thou been a grave-maker ?

First G. D.

Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

Hamlet.

How long is that since ?

First G. D.

Cannot you tell that ? every fool can tell that : it was the very day that young Hamlet was born,—he that is mad and sent into England.

Hamlet.

Ay, marry, why was he sent into England ?

First G. D.

Why, because he was mad : he shall recover his wits there ; or, if he do not, it 's no great matter there.

Hamlet.

Why ?

First G. D.

'T will not be seen in him there ; there the men are as mad as he.

Hamlet.

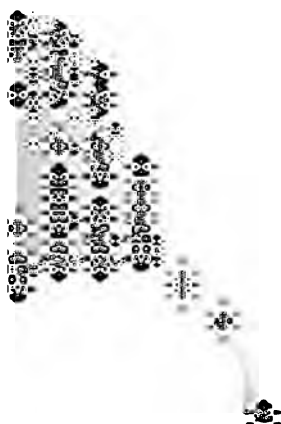
How came he mad ?

First G. D.

Very strangely, they say.

Hamlet.

How strangely ?



First G. D.

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

Hamlet.

Upon what ground ?

First G. D.

Why, here in Denmark : I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Hamlet.

How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot ?

First G. D.

Faith, if he be not rotten before he die, he will last you some eight year or nine year : a tanner will last you nine year.

Hamlet.

Why he more than another ?

First G. D.

Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while ; and your water is a sore decayer of your dead body. Here's a skull now ; this skull hath lain you i' the earth three and twenty years.

[Grave-digger takes up the skull with the leather remnant adhering to it.]

Hamlet.

Whose was it ?

First G. D.

A mad fellow's it was : whose do you think it was ?

Hamlet.

Nay, I know not.

First G. D.

A pestilence on him for a mad rogue ! 'a poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

Hamlet.

This ?

First G. D.

E'en that.

*Hamlet.**[Takes the skull.]*

Alas! poor Yorick!—I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that.—Pr'ythee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Horatio.

What 's that, my lord ?

Hamlet.

Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth ?

Horatio.

E'en so

Hamlet.

And smelt so ? pah !

*[He gives the skull to the grave-digger.]**Horatio.*

E'en so, my lord.

Hamlet.

To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole ?

Horatio.

'T were to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Hamlet.

No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: as thus; Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel?

Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!

[*Dead March is heard.*

But soft! but soft! aside:—here comes the king—
The queen, the courtiers: who is that they follow?
And with such maimèd rites? This doth betoken,
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life: 't was of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark.

[*Retiring with Horatio R.*

[*Enter Priest, &c., in procession, with Corse of Ophelia,—Laertes and Mourners following; King, Queen, their trains, &c. The Corse is borne upon a bier by four or six women, who stand in front of the grave until the coffin has been lowered by the grave-diggers to its place. Funeral music sounds till then, when it ceases, and the dialogue begins.*

Laer.

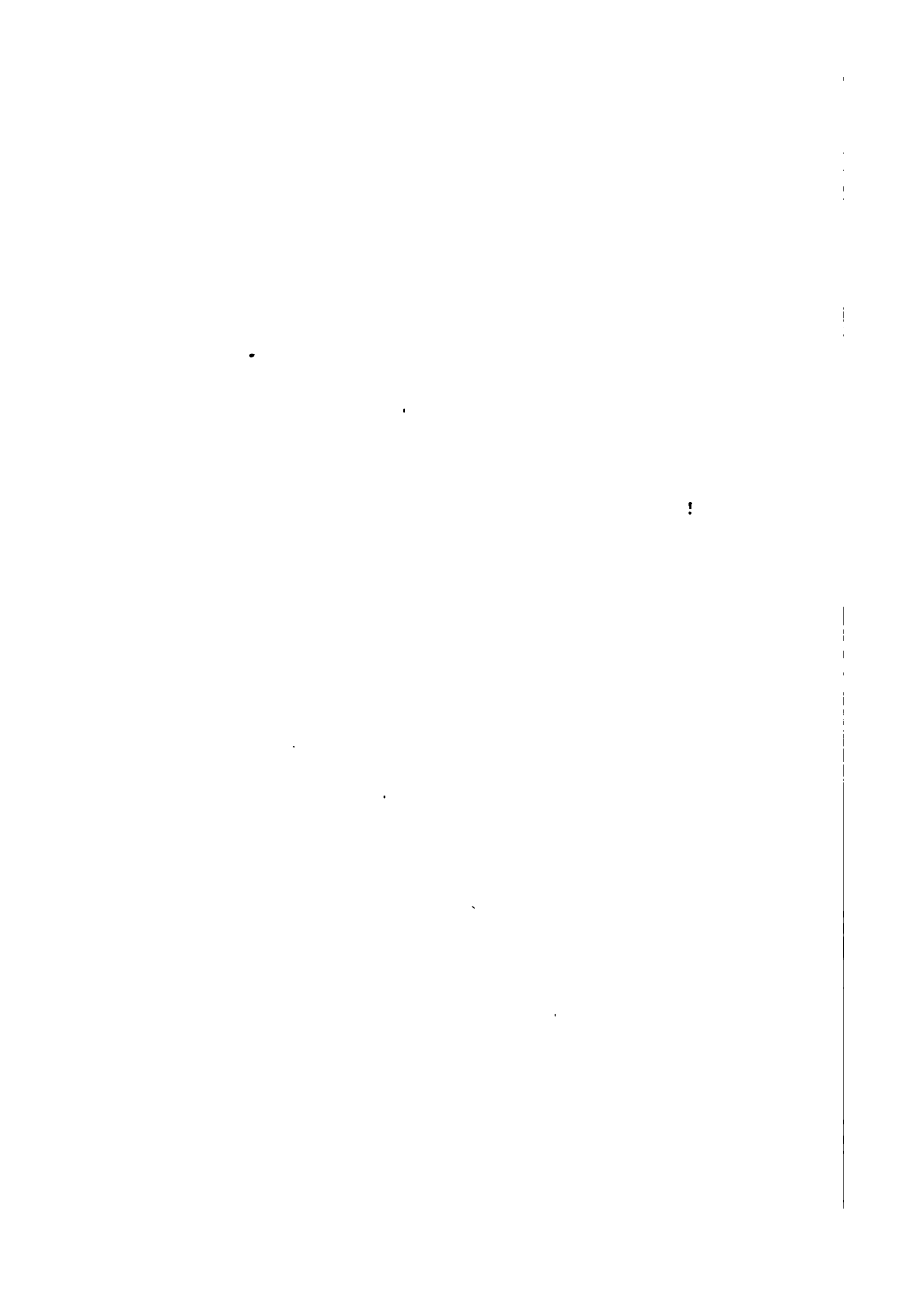
What ceremony else?

Hamlet.

That is Laertes,
A very noble youth: mark.

Laer.

What ceremony else?



Priest.

Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warranty : her death was doubtful ;
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet ; for charitable prayers,
Shards, flints, and pebbles, should be thrown on her :
Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

Laer.

Must there no more be done ?

Priest.

No more be done !
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem, and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

Laer.

O, from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring !— I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

Hamlet.

What ! the fair Ophelia !

Queen.

[*Scattering flowers.*]

Sweets to the sweet : farewell !
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife ;
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not have strewed thy grave.

Laer.

O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursèd head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of !— Hold off the earth awhile,

Till I have caught her once more in mine arms :

[Leaps into the grave.]

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

Hamlet.

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis ? whose phrase of sorrow
Cónjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers ? This is I,
Hamlet, the Dane.

[Hamlet advances.]

Laer.

[Leaps out of the grave and rushes upon Hamlet.]

The devil take thy soul !

[Hamlet and Laertes struggle together for a moment.]

King.

Pluck them asunder.

Hamlet.

Thou prayest not well.
I prythee, take thy fingers from my throat ;
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear : hold off thy hand !

[The attendants part them.]

Hamlet.

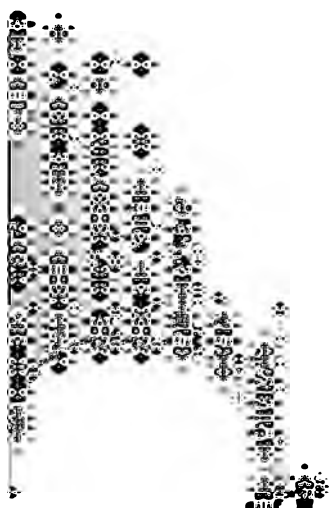
Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

Queen.

O, my son, what theme ?

Hamlet.

I loved Ophelia : forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.—What wilt thou do for her ?



Queen.

O, he is mad, Laertes.

Hamlet.

Come! show me what thou 'lt do:
Woul't weep? woul't fight? woul't fast? woul't tear thyself?
I 'll do 't.—Dost thou come here to whine?
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her, and so will I:
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou 'lt mouth,
I 'll rant as well as thou.

Queen.

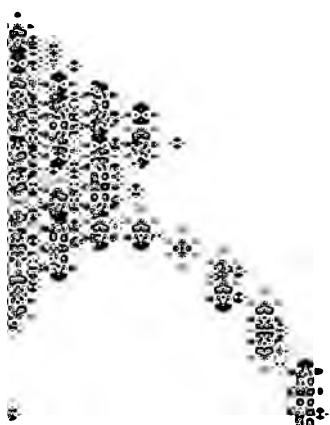
This is mere madness:
And thus awhile the fit will work on him;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.

Hamlet.

Hear you, sir;
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever: but it is no matter;
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.
[*Exit Hamlet R.*]

King.

I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.—
[*Exit Horatio R.*]
[*To Laertes.*] Strengthen your patience in our last night's
speech;
We 'll put the matter to the present push,—
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.—
This grave shall have a living monument.
[*Picture. Dead March. Scene changes.*]



Scene Second.—IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE.

[*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*]

Hamlet.

But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For, by the image of my cause, I see
The portraiture of his.

Horatio.

Who comes here?

[*Enter Osr. L.*]

Osr.

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

Hamlet.

I humbly thank you, sir.—

Dost know this water-fly? [*Aside to Horatio.*]

Horatio. [*Aside to Hamlet.*]

No, my good lord.

Hamlet. [*Aside to Horatio.*]

Thy state is the more gracious; for 't is a vice to know him.

Osr.

Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

Hamlet.

I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use; 't is for the head.

Osr.

I thank your lordship, 't is very hot.

Hamlet.

No, believe me, 't is very cold; the wind is northerly.

Osr.

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Hamlet.

But yet, methinks it is very sultry and hot ; or my complexion —

Osr.

Exceedingly, my lord ; it is very sultry,—as 't were,—I cannot tell how.—But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you, that he has laid a great wager on your head : sir, this is the matter,—

Hamlet.

I beseech you, remember—

[Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.]

Osr.

Nay, in good faith ; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes ; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society, and great showing : indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

Hamlet.

What imports the nomination of this gentleman ?

Osr.

Of Laertes ?

Hamlet.

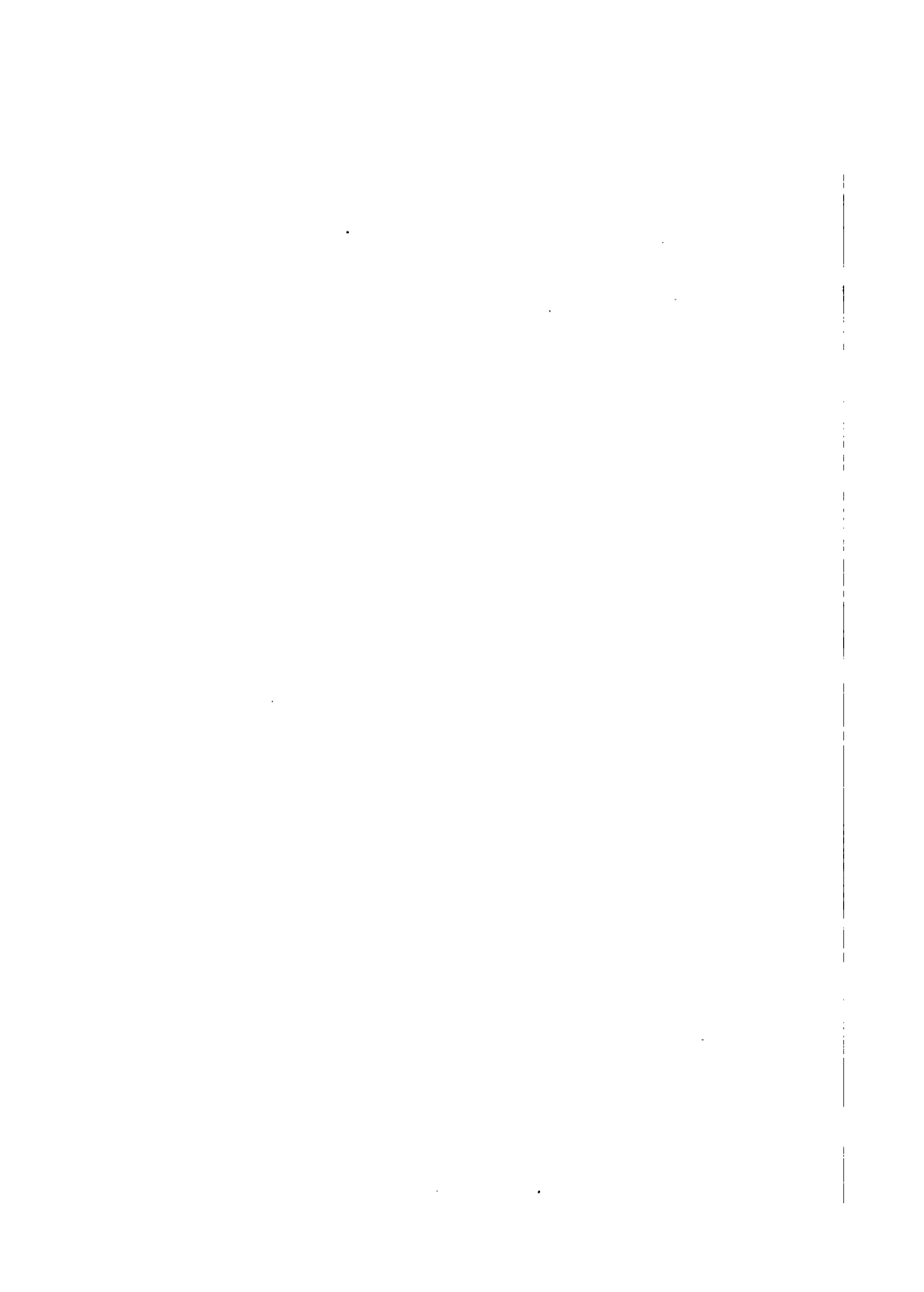
Of him, sir.

Osr.

You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

Hamlet.

I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence.



Osr.

I mean, sir, for his weapon.

Hamlet.

What is his weapon?

Osr.

Rapier and dagger.

Hamlet.

That 's two of his weapons: but, well.

Osr.

The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

Hamlet.

What call you the carriages?

Osr.

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

Hamlet.

The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides.

Osr.

The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer?

Hamlet.

How if I answer no?

Osr.

I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

8



Hamlet.

Sir, it is the breathing time of day with me; let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

Osr.

Shall I deliver you so?

Hamlet.

To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

Osr.

I commend my duty to your lordship. [Exit Osr.]

Horatio.

You will lose this wager, my lord.

Hamlet.

I do not think so; since he went into France, I have been in continual practice. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

Horatio.

Nay, good my lord,—

Hamlet.

It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

Horatio.

If your mind dislike anything, obey it: I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

Hamlet.

Not a whit: we defy augury: there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 't is not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all: since no man, of aught he leaves, knows, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.

[Exit. Change.]

1

Scene Third. { A HALL IN THE CASTLE. KING, QUEEN,
LAERTES, BERNARDO, MARCELLUS,
LORDS, OSRIC, AND ATTENDANTS, WITH
FOILS, &c., ARE DISCOVERED. FLOUR-
ISH OF TRUMPETS.

[*Hamlet and Horatio enter.*

King.

Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

Hamlet.

Give me your pardon, sir; I've done you wrong;
But pardon it, as you are a gentleman.
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother.

Laer.

I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive, in this case, should stir me most
To my revenge:
I do receive your offered love like love
And will not wrong it.

Hamlet.

I embrace it freely;
And will this brother's wager frankly play.—
Give us the foils.

Laer.

Come, one for me.

Hamlet.

I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance
Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night,
Stick fiery off indeed.

Laer.

You mock me, sir.

Hamlet.

No, by this hand.

King.

Give them the foils, young Osric.

[Osric gives a foil to each.]

Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

Hamlet.

Very well, my lord;
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

King.

I do not fear it; I have seen you both:
But since he is bettered, we have therefore odds.

Laer.

This is too heavy, let me see another.

Hamlet.

This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

Osr.

Ay, my good lord.

King.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,

[Laertes, unseen by the others, poisons his weapon.]

Let all the battlements their ordnance fire,
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;
And in the cup a union shall he throw,
Richer than that which four successive kings
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cup;

[Bernardo gives cup to the King.]

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth.

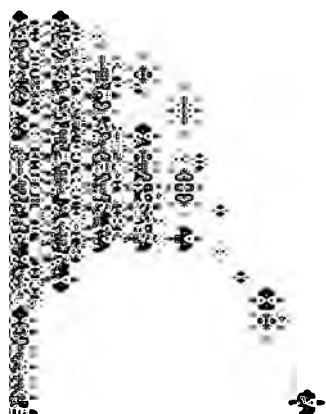
"Now the king drinks to Hamlet."—*[Flourish and cannon.]*

[Hamlet and Laertes take position to fence. Music.]

Come, begin;—

And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

[They play.]



One. *Hamlet.*

No. *Laer.*

Judgment. *Hamlet.*

A hit, a very palpable hit. *Osr.*

Well ;—again. *Laer.*

King. [*Drops poison in the cup.*

Stay. Hamlet, this pearl is thine ;
Here's to thy health.

[*Pretends to drink. Trumpets sound, and cannon
are shot off within.*

Give him the cup.

Hamlet.
I'll play this bout first ; set it by awhile.—

Come. [*They play.*].—Another hit ; what say you ?

Laer.
A touch, a touch, I do confess.

King.
Our son shall win.

Queen.
The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.
[*Takes the cup and drinks.*

Hamlet.
Good madam !
[*While the Queen drinks, Osric and others approach
the King.*

King.
Gertrude, do not drink. [*Suddenly observing Queen.*



Queen.

I have, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

King.

[*Aside.*

It is the poisoned cup; it is too late.

Laer.

[*Aside.*

I 'll hit him now,

And yet 't is almost 'gainst my conscience.

Hamlet.

Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally;
I pray you, pass with your best violence;
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

Laer.

Say you so? come on.

[*They play. Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

King.

Part them; they are incensed.

Hamlet.

Nay, come again.

[*The Queen moans.*

Osr.

Look to the queen there, ho!

Horatio.

How is it, my lord?

Osr.

How is it, Laertes?

Laer.

Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osrice;
I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Hamlet.

How does the queen?

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King.

She swoons to see them bleed.

Queen.

No, no, the drink, the drink,—O, my dear Hamlet,—
The drink, the drink!—I am poisoned.

[The King and others assist the Queen—who is led out, followed by her ladies. The King returns and calls his lords around him on the throne.]

Hamlet.

O, villainy!—Ho! let the door be locked:
Treachery! seek it out.

[Guards exeunt. Laertes falls into chair R.]

Laer.

It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
No medicine in the world can do thee good,
In thee there is not half an hour of life;
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenomed; the foul practice
Hath turned itself on me; lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again: thy mother 's poisoned:—
I can no more:—the king, the king 's to blame.

Hamlet.

The point,—envenomed too!—
Then, venom, to thy work.

All.

Treason! treason!

[Lords draw their swords to defend the King. Hamlet rushes through the crowd and stabs him.]

Hamlet.

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damnèd Dane,
Follow my mother.

[The King falls and dies.]



Laer.

He is justly served ;
 Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet :
 Mine and my father's death come not on thee,
 Nor thine on me !

*[Laertes dies.]**Hamlet.*

Heaven make thee free of it ! I follow thee.
 Horatio, I am dead ;
 Thou liv'st ; report me and my cause aright
 To the unsatisfied.

Horatio.

Never believe it :
 I am more an antique Roman than a Dane :
 Here 's yet some liquor left.

*[Seizes the cup. Hamlet wrests it from him.]**Hamlet.*

As thou 'rt a man,
 Give me the cup : let go ; by heaven, I 'll have it.—
 O, good Horatio, what a wounded name,
 Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me !
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
 To tell my story.
 O, I die, Horatio ;
 The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit.
 The rest is silence.

*[Hamlet dies.]**Horatio.*

Now cracks a noble heart :—good night, sweet prince ;
 And flocks of angels sing thee to thy rest !—

*[March (of Fortinbras) is heard at distance.
 Picture.]*

SLOW CURTAIN.

H A M L E T .

APPENDIX.

I.—THE CHARACTER OF HAMLET.

HAMLET is a poetic ideal. He is not an ancient Dane, fair, blue-eyed, yellow-haired, stout, and lymphatic; but he is the sombre, dreamy, mysterious hero of a melancholy poem. The actor who would represent him aright must not go behind the tragedy in which he occurs, in quest of historic realities, but, dealing with an ideal subject, must treat it in an ideal manner, as far removed as possible from the plane of actual life. Interest in the Prince of Denmark is not, to a very considerable extent, inspired by the circumstances that surround him, or by his proceedings: it depends upon the quality of the man,—the interior spirit and fragrance of his character,—and upon the words in which that spirit is expressed. There is an element in Hamlet, no less elusive than beautiful, which lifts the mind to a sublime height, fills the heart with a nameless grief, and haunts the soul as with remembered music of a gentle voice that will speak no more. It might be called sorrowful grandeur, sad majesty, ineffable mournfulness, grief-stricken isolation, or patient spiritual anguish. Whatever called, the name might prove inapt and inadequate; but the magical force of this attribute can never fail to be felt. Hamlet fascinates by his personality; and the actor can only succeed in presenting him, who possesses, in himself, this peculiar quality of fascination. It is something that cannot be drawn from the library, nor poured from the flagon, nor bought in the shops. Hamlet is, essentially, spiritual. It is not enough, therefore, in the presentation of this part, that the actor should make it known that Hamlet's soul is haunted by supernatural powers: he must also make it felt that Hamlet possesses a soul such as it is possible for supernatural powers to haunt. At the beginning, and before his mind has been shocked and unsettled by the awful apparition of his father's spirit in arms, he is found deeply prone to sombre thought upon the nothingness of this world and the solemn mystery of the world beyond the grave. This mental drift does not flow from his student fancy, but is the spontaneous, passionate tendency of his nature: for in the first self-commun-

ing monologue that he utters he is revealed as having brooded on the expediency of suicide; and not long afterward he avows belief that the powers of hell have great control over spirits, like his own, which are melancholy and weak. The soul of Hamlet, then, must be felt to have been—in its original essence and condition, before grief, shame and terror arrived to burden and distract it—intensely sensitive to the miseries that are in this world; to the fact that all the pomp of human life is nothing but an evanescent pageant, passing, on a thin tissue, over what Shakespeare himself has so finely called “the blind cave of eternal night”; and to all the strange, vague influences, sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrible, that seem wafted out of the great unknown. Out of this high sensibility, coupled with the conditions into which he is born and with the miserable state into which he is forced by the crimes of his mother and his uncle and the visitation of his father’s ghost, the whole man may be deduced. He is a compound of spiritualized intellect, masculine strength, feminine softness, over-imaginative reason, lassitude of thought, autumnal gloom, lovable temperament, piteous, tear-freighted humor, princely grace of condition, brooding melancholy, the philosophic mind, and the deep heart. His nature is everything noble. He is placed upon a pinnacle of earthly greatness. He is afflicted with a grief that breaks his heart, and thereupon with a shock that disorders his mind. He is charged with a solemn and dreadful duty, to the fulfilment of which his will is wholly inadequate. He sees so widely and understands so dubiously the nature of things, in the universe of God, that his sense of moral responsibility is overwhelmed and his power of action completely arrested. He thinks greatly, but to no purpose. He wanders darkly in the border land betwixt reason and madness—haunted now with sweet strains and majestic images of heaven, and now with terrific, uncertain shapes of hell. And so he drifts aimlessly, on a sea of misery, into the oblivion of death. This man is a type of a class of beings upon the earth to whom life is a dream, all its surroundings too vast and awful for endurance, all its facts sad, action impossible or fitful and fruitless, and of whom it never can be said that they are happy till the grass is growing upon their graves. W. W.

II.—FACTS ABOUT HAMLET.

The story upon which the tragedy of “Hamlet” is founded is, probably, fabulous. It first occurs in the History of Denmark [“*Historica Danica*”], written by Saxo Grammaticus, and first printed in 1514. It was retold about the middle of the sixteenth century [1570], under the name of the “*Hystorie of Hamblet*,” in Belleforest’s “*Histoire Tra-*

giques," a work that was translated from French into English, and became popular in England. A perfect copy of the translation exists in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge; is dated 1608; and is the earliest edition known to be extant. Shakespeare is supposed to have known this work; but, as his tragedy of "Hamlet" was first published in 1603, he must have known it either in the original French, or in an earlier translation. It is possible that he did not know it at all, but that he based his "Hamlet" on an old play on the same subject. Such a play—though, perhaps, he was himself the author of it—was in existence. It is referred to, in 1589, by Thomas Nash, and, in 1596, by Lodge—authors and actors contemporary with Shakespeare. The theory has been broached that Shakespeare wrote "Hamlet" early in his life, and, many years afterward, revised and perfected it. No one contends, though, that he invented the subject. His colossal genius was shown in his wonderful treatment of it. "Hamlet" was five times—if not oftener—published in quarto, at London, during its author's life. It had been acted, and by the company to which Shakespeare belonged, prior to the summer of 1602. There is a legend—dubious but grateful—that the poet himself was the representative of the Ghost. The first quarto [1603] is supposed to have been surreptitiously published, by an unscrupulous printer of the period, and it is not considered authentic. Much stress, in that version, is laid upon Hamlet's madness; the Queen is made distinctly to disclaim complicity with Claudius in her first husband's murder; direction is given that, in the Closet Scene,—Act Third,—the Ghost shall enter "in his nightgown;" and Polonius figures as Corambis, while his servant, Reynaldo, is called Montano. The second quarto, published in 1604, exhibits great improvements on the first. The subsequent quartos are dated 1605, 1607,—conjecturally,—and 1611. Then came the folio of 1623, in which "Hamlet" occupies 31 pages. The text of the tragedy has been much discussed; but a careful comparison of the old quartos with the first folio, made by many scholars, has finally settled it in a satisfactory manner. The substance of the tragedy, as Shakespeare wrote it, seems to have been obtained by taking the folio of 1623 as a basis, and amplifying it by large additions from the quarto of 1604. The reprint of "Hamlet" in the former is thought to have been made from a manuscript of the piece, that Heminge and Condell obtained from Shakespeare's theatre. The quarto version may have been authorized by Shakespeare himself. The poet's final draught of the tragedy was, doubtless, made in 1601. He had, four years previously, established his family in New Place, at Stratford-on-Avon; but it does not appear that he had relinquished the

residence he is known to have occupied in 1596, at Southwark. "Hamlet," therefore, probably, was written in the old Borough. The first representative of Hamlet is declared to have been Richard Burbage; chiefly on the authority of a manuscript Elegy upon that actor (1619), which mentions that he was "fat and scant of breath" in the fencing scene. The honor of having been the original Hamlet is also ascribed [Tallis's Dramatic Magazine, June, 1851] to John Lowin; and it is, furthermore, said that to him Shakespeare himself gave many suggestions.

W. W.

III.—THE ORIGINAL STORY OF HAMLET.

"Fengon, having secretly assembled certain men, and perceiving himself strong enough to execute his enterprise,—Horvendile, his brother, being at a banquet with his friends,—suddenly set upon him, where he slew him as traitorously as cunningly he purged himself of so detestable a murder to his subjects; for that before he had any violent or bloody hands, or once committed parricide upon his brother, he had incestuously abused his wife, whose honour he ought to have sought and procured, as traitorously he pursued and effected his destruction. * * * * *

"Boldened and encouraged by his impunity, Fengon ventured to couple himself in marriage with her * * * and the unfortunate and wicked woman, that had received the honour to be the wife of one of the valiantest and wisest princes of the North, imbedded herself in such vile sort as to falsify her faith unto him, and, which is worse, to marry him that had been the tyrannous murderer of her lawful husband. * * *

"Geruth having so much forgotten herself, the prince Hamblet, perceiving himself to be in danger of his life, as being abandoned of his own mother, to beguile the tyrant into his subtleties, counterfeited the madman with such craft and subtle practices that he made show as if he had utterly lost his wits; and under that veil he covered his pretense, and defended his life from the treasons and practices of the tyrant, his uncle. For, every day being in the queen's palace (who as then was more careful to please her paramour, than ready to revenge the cruel death of her husband, or to restore her son to his inheritance), he rent and tore his clothes, wallowing and lying in the dirt and mire, running through the streets like a man distraught, not speaking one word but such as seemed to proceed of madness and mere frenzy; all his actions and gestures being no other than the right countenances of a man deprived of all reason and understanding, in such sort, that as

then he seemed fit for nothing but to make sport to the pages and ruffling courtiers that attended in the court of his uncle and father-in-law. But many times he did divers actions of great and deep consideration, and often made such and so fit answers, that a wise man would soon have judged from what spirit so fine an invention might proceed. * * * * *

"Hamblet likewise had intelligence in what danger he was like to fall, if by any means he seemed to obey, or once like the wanton toys and vicious provocations of the gentlewoman sent to him by his uncle; which much abashed the prince, as then wholly being in affection to the lady; but by her he was likewise informed of the treason, as being one that from her infancy loved and favored him, and would have been exceeding sorrowful for his misfortune. * * * * *

"Among the friends of Fengon there was one that, above all the rest, doubted of Hamblet's practices in counterfeiting the madman. His device to entrap Hamblet in his subtleties was thus—that King Fengon should make as though he were to go some long voyage concerning affairs of great importance, and that in the meantime Hamblet should be shut up alone in a chamber with his mother, wherein some other should secretly be hidden behind the hangings, there to stand and hear their speeches, and the complots by them to be taken concerning the accomplishment of the dissembling fool's pretense; * * * and withal offered himself to be the man that should stand to hearken and bear witness of Hamblet's speeches with his mother. This invention pleased the king exceedingly well. * * * * *

"Meantime, the counselor entered secretly into the queen's chamber, and there hid himself behind the arras, not long before the queen and Hamblet came thither, who, being crafty and politic, as soon as he was within the chamber, doubting some treason, used his ordinary manner of dissimulation, and began to come like a cock, beating with his arms (in such manner as cocks use to strike with their wings) upon the hangings of the chamber; whereby, feeling something stirring under them, he cried, "A rat! a rat!" and presently drawing his sword, thrust it into the hangings, which done, he pulled the counselor, half dead, out by the heels, and made an end of killing him. * * * By which means having discovered the ambush, and given the inventor thereof his just reward, he came again to his mother, who in the meantime wept and tormented herself; and having once again searched every corner of the chamber, perceiving himself to be alone with her, he began in sober earnest and discreet manner to speak unto her, saying,

“ ‘What treason is this, O most infamous woman, * * * who, under the vail of a dissembling creature, covereth the most wicked and detestable crime that man could ever imagine or was committed? Now may I be assured to trust you, that like a vile wanton adulteress, altogether impudent and given over to her pleasure, runs spreading forth her arms to embrace the traitorous villainous tyrant that murdered my father? * * * O, Queen Geruth! it is licentiousness only that has made you deface out of your mind the memory of the valor and virtues of the good king, your husband and my father. * * * Be not offended, I pray you, madam, if, transported with dolor and grief, I speak so boldly unto you, and that I respect you less than duty requireth; for you, having forgotten me, and wholly rejected the memory of the deceased king, my father, must not be ashamed if I also surpass the bounds and limits of due consideration.’ * * * ”

“Although the Queen perceived herself nearly touched, and that Hamblet moved her to the quick, where she felt herself interested, nevertheless she forgot all disdain and wrath, which thereby she might as then have had, hearing herself so sharply chidden and reproved, to behold the gallant spirit of her son, and to think what she might hope, and the easier expect of his so great policy and wisdom. But on the one side, she durst not lift up her eyes to behold him, remembering her offense, and on the other side, she would gladly have embraced her son, in regard of the wise admonitions by him given unto her. * * * ”

“After this, F'engon came to the court again, and determined that Hamblet should be sent into England. Now to bear him company were assigned two of F'engon's faithful ministers, bearing letters engraved in wood, that contained Hamblet's death, in such sort as he had advertised the King of England. But the subtle Danish prince, while his companions slept, having read the letters, and known his uncle's great treason, with the wicked and villainous minds of the two courtiers that led him to the slaughter, erased out the letters that concerned his death, and instead thereof graved others, with commission to the King of England to hang his two companions. * * * ”

“Hamblet, while his father lived, had been instructed in that devilish art, whereby the wicked spirit abuseth mankind, and advertiseth him of things past. It toucheth not the matter herein to discover whether this prince, by reason of his over-great melancholy, had received those impressions, divining that which never any but himself had before declared.”—Finally, Hamblet, after a complete revenge, becomes King of Denmark, marries two wives, and dies in battle.—See PAYNE COLLIER'S SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY, vol. i.

IV.—THE MADNESS OF HAMLET.

"Under Shakespeare's treatment Hamlet's madness becomes something altogether different from the obstinate premeditation or melancholy enthusiasm of a young prince of the Middle Ages, placed in a dangerous position, and engaged in a dark design: it is a grave moral condition, a great malady of soul, which, at certain epochs and in certain states of society and of manners, frequently attacks the most highly gifted and the noblest of our species, and afflicts them with a disturbance of mind which sometimes borders very closely upon madness. The world is full of evil, and of all kinds of evil. What sufferings, crimes, and fatal, although innocent errors! What general and private iniquities, both strikingly apparent and utterly unknown! What merits, either stifled or neglected, become lost to the public and a burden to their possessors! What falsehood, and coldness, and levity, and ingratitude, and forgetfulness, abound in the relations and feelings of men! Life is so short—and yet so agitated—sometimes so burdensome and sometimes so empty! The future is so obscure! So much darkness at the end of so many trials! In reference to those who only see this phase of the world and of human destiny, it is easy to understand why their mind becomes disturbed, why their heart fails them, and why a misanthropic melancholy becomes an habitual feeling, which plunges them by turns into irritation or doubt—into ironical contempt or utter prostration, * * * Read the four great monologues in which the Prince of Denmark abandons himself to the reflective expression of his inmost feelings; gather together from the whole play the passages in which he casually gives them utterance; seek out and sum up that which is manifest and that which is hidden in all that he thinks and says, and you will everywhere recognize the presence of the moral malady just described. Therein truly resides, much more than in his personal griefs and perils, the source of Hamlet's melancholy; in this consists his fixed idea and his madness. * * * In order to render the exhibition of so sombre a disease not only endurable but attractive, Shakespeare has endowed the sufferer himself with the gentlest and most alluring qualities. He has made Hamlet handsome, popular, generous, affectionate, and even tender."

GUIZOT.

V.—INCIDENTS AND SCHEME OF HAMLET.

"Hamlet is disqualified for action by his excess of the reflective tendencies, and by his unstable will, which alternates between complete inactivity and fits of excited energy. Naturally sensitive, he receives a

painful shock from the hasty second marriage of his mother; already the springs of faith and joy in his nature are embittered; then follows the terrible discovery of his father's murder, with the injunction laid upon him to revenge the crime; upon this, again, follow the repulses which he receives from Ophelia. A deep melancholy lays hold of his spirit, and all of life grows dark and sad to his vision. Although hating his father's murderer, he has little heart to push on his revenge. He is aware that he is suspected, and surrounded by spies. Partly to baffle them; partly to create a veil behind which to seclude his true self; partly because his whole moral nature is, indeed, deeply disordered, he assumes the part of one whose wits have gone astray. Except for one loyal friend, he is alone among enemies or supposed traitors. Ophelia he regards as no more loyal or honest to him than his mother had been to her dead husband. The ascertainment of Claudius's guilt by means of the play still leaves him incapable of the last decisive act of vengeance. Not so, however, with the king, who, now recognizing his foe in Hamlet, does not delay to despatch him to a bloody death in England. But there is in Hamlet a terrible power of sudden and desperate action. From the melancholy which broods over him after the death of Ophelia, he rouses himself to the play of swords with Laertes, and at the last, with strength which leaps up before its final extinction, he accomplishes the punishment of the malefactor."

EDWARD DOWDEN.

VI.—THE KEY-NOTE OF HAMLET.

"In Hamlet, Shakespeare seems to have wished to exemplify the moral necessity of a due balance between our attention to the objects of our senses and our meditation on the workings of our mind—an equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds. In Hamlet this balance is disturbed; his thoughts and the images of his fancy are far more vivid than his actual perceptions; and his very perceptions, instantly passing through the medium of his contemplation, acquire, as they pass, a form and color not actually their own. Hence, we see a great, an almost enormous, intellectual activity, and a proportionate aversion to real action consequent upon it, with all its symptoms and accompanying qualities. This character Shakespeare places in circumstances under which it is obliged to act on the spur of the moment. Hamlet is brave, and careless of death; but he vacillates from sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve."

COLERIDGE.

"By an internal impulse, Hamlet is continually aiming at his own idea of man; whom he calls a work of wonder, 'noble in reason, infinite in faculties, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a god.' And, accordingly, because it is, on this account, repugnant to his nature to adopt any course of conduct upon external compulsion, there arises a conflict between the inward bias of his mind and the pressure of outward circumstances. He is unable to enter upon the enjoined work, not simply because it is too great and weighty for him, but because he cannot transmute it into an inward spontaneous impulse of his own. Hence come his vacillation, his hesitating and procrastinating, and his fluctuating purpose, now advancing and now falling back; hence, too, the vehemence of his self-accusation, with which he would goad himself into prompt measures, without, however, being able to control time and its flight; hence, too, the inconsistency and irresolution of his proceedings, and apparently also of his character." ULRICI.

VII.—TIME, AGE AND PERSONS OF HAMLET.

Queen Gertrude is married to King Claudius within a month after the death of King Hamlet. Within two months after that occurrence the spirit of the deceased monarch appears to the Prince. The first act opens at midnight, and covers about twenty-four hours. In the play-scene it is stated by Ophelia that King Hamlet has been dead four months. About two months, therefore, must be supposed to elapse between Hamlet's meeting with his father's ghost and the scene in which he catches the conscience of the King. On the night of the play he kills Polonius. The next day [see the beginning of Act IV.] he is embarked for England. He has been two days at sea when he escapes to the pirate galley. It may be assumed that his homeward journey occupies two days more,—perhaps longer. Polonius, meanwhile, has been hurriedly and privately buried, and Ophelia has gone mad and been accidentally drowned. Hamlet is in Elsinore on the day of Ophelia's burial, and he, by chance, meets the funeral train in the church-yard. The final catastrophe seems to occur immediately after the interment,—albeit, a bout with foils is an incident but harshly consorted with the day of such a solemnity. Altogether, the action of "Hamlet" is seen to be circumscribed, certainly, within ten weeks. The season of the year is indeterminate. "The air bites shrewdly" in the first act; but Ophelia gathers flowers in the fourth, and a military expedition is seen to be in progress. Late autumn is the season most consonant with the tone of the tragedy. The grave-digger's words show that Hamlet is thirty years

old; the Queen, accordingly, must be set down at about forty-eight. The King, it seems reasonable to think, is younger than his wife, or about her own age. Horatio should be older than Hamlet, and Laertes considerably younger. Polonius, whom Coleridge well denotes as "the personification of wisdom no longer possessed," should be deemed about sixty. Ophelia is "a young maid." The courtiers are, obviously, young men. It is Shakespeare's method, in displaying action long past, to display it as if proceeding in the present, and to surround and embellish it with illustrative accessories, often appertaining to a period long subsequent to its own. There was, for example, no University at Wittenberg in the period of "Hamlet," but there was a University there in the time of Shakespeare. King Claudius, like King John (1199), is furnished with cannon; but, in fact, cannon were not in use till the later period of the battle of Cressy (1346). In short, the civilization, the feelings, and the adjuncts of the tragedy [and this determines the character of the dresses and properties that may be used in representing it] are consonant, not with the period to which it relates, but to the period in which it was written. Mr. Booth, however, has been accustomed to dress this piece in conformity with the usages of an ancient period in the history of Denmark, in order to invest its scenes with something of the character of the age to which its story relates.

W. W.







